The stone rejecth.

The STONE *rejected by the Builders, exalted as the Head-stone of the Corner.*

A SERMON

PREACH'D

At the Opening of the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling*,

At *Perth*, *October* 10. 1732.

To which is subjoin'd

A SERMON preach'd *June* 4th 1732, on the Sabbath Evening after the Sacrament, from *Isa.* ix. 6. — *The Government shall be upon his Shoulder.*

Both by Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE, Minister of the Gospel at *Stirling*.

The Fourth Edition.

Enter'd in Stationers Hall.

EDINBURGH,

Printed for *David Duncan*, and sold at his House at the Foot of the West-Bow; by *John Briggs* in the *Lucken-booths*, and at *Glasgow*, *Perth* and *Dumfries*. 1733.

Ed. 26 6. additions + hw

Robert
&
Lockhart

READER.

THE following Sermon gave occaſion to three days warm debate in the reverend Synod of Perth *and* Stirling, *and has been the ſubject of much talk and ſpeculation ſince that time. Whether the cenſures of men about it be juſt or unjuſt, is now ſubmitted to the impartial world to judge. The ſermon was copied from the author's original notes by another hand, who could read his characters, but was in no hazard of making any additions or alterations. Several things here were omitted in the delivery for the ſake of brevity: But nothing material was delivered but what comes abroad. And with reference to the quarrelled expreſſions, ſo ſoon as the author knew what paſſages of his diſcourſe were pointed at by the reverend Synod (which was the day immediately after it was preached) he took care to reviſe his notes, and make theſe expreſſions run in the terms in which they were delivered, as near as either he or ſome of the audience could remember. And that the reader's curioſity may be ſatisfied, he will find theſe paſſages or ſentences pointed at in the index at the foot.**

The author's deſign in pitching and preaching upon that text, was what he could to raiſe

* Page 14. line 5. to the End of the Period.
P. 17. line 14, 15, 16.
P. 20. line 13. to the End of the Period.
P. 26. line 18. to the End of the Period.
P. 38. line 10 from the Foot.
P. 39. line 15, 16, &c.
P. 40. line 1. to near the cloſe of the Page.

the Glory of the Bleſſed Corner-ſtone, to ſet up the corruptions of the Jewiſh *builders as ſo many beacons, that builders of our day might beware of them, and to caſt in the ſmall mite of his teſtimony againſt what to him appears an Injury done, either to Chriſt perſonal or myſtical. If theſe ends be reached, either in the preaching or publication, it will afford matter of joy to the author, whatever be the event of the depending proceſs with reſpect to himſelf.*

If any think upon the reading of the following diſcourſe, that there is too great freedom uſed with reſpect to the preſent ſteps of defection; let them remember, that there is now no other way left to bear teſtimony againſt ſuch things, but by warning the world againſt them, from preſs or pulpit; repreſentations and petitions from miniſters or church members at the bar being utterly diſregarded, and no acceſs to enter any proteſt or diſſent againſt theſe proceedings in the publick records, for the exoneration of conſcience, or the information of our poſterity, that ſuch things did not paſs in our day without a ſtruggle and teſtimony againſt them.

If any of the author's friends and well-wiſhers be afraid of further trouble to him, upon the account of this ſermon; let them know, that, through grace, he chooſes rather to ſuffer with the oppreſſed members of Chriſt, than to enjoy all the eaſe and pleaſure of thoſe who oppreſs them in their ſpiritual liberties; which being the purchaſe of a Redeemer's Blood will be reckoned for before the ſcene be ended. Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26. 1 Joh. iii. 16. 2 Theſſ. i. 6, 7.

A SERMON, ON

Pſal. cxviii. 22. *The Stone which the builders rejected, the ſame is made the head-ſtone of the Corner.*

IT is probable this Pſalm was penned by *David*, when the ark of God was brought up from the houſe of *Obed-edom*, to its proper place in *Jeruſalem*, after the inteſtine broils between the houſe of *David* and *Saul* had happily iſſued in *David*'s promotion, by the common conſent of all the tribes, to the crown and kingdom of *Iſrael*. But tho' this was the occaſion, yet the ſpirit of God had in it a further view, namely to Chriſt himſelf, of whom *David* and his adminiſtrations in *Iſrael* were but a faint type and ſhadow.

David's acceſſion to the throne was thro' many ſtorms of oppoſition; altho' God had choſen and ordained him for the kingdom and government, yet he was oppoſed by the houſe of *Saul*, and them who adhered to that Family; yet after all, the houſe of *David* prevailed. Juſt

ſo

ſo was it with the Son of *David*, our glorious Redeemer, hell and earth combin'd againſt the Lord and his *Meſſiah*, but God had determined that the government ſhould be upon his ſhoulders, that his king ſhould be ſet upon his holy hill of *Zion*; and he carries his deſign againſt all oppoſers, as you ſee in my text. *The ſtone which the builders rejected, the ſame is made the head-ſtone of the corner.*

I need not ſtay to prove that theſe words are to be underſtood of Chriſt, after the expreſs application that is made of them to him by himſelf and his apoſtles in the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament, *Mat.* xxi. 42. *Acts* iv. 7. 1 *Pet.* ii. 7, 8. *Eph.* ii. 20.

In the Words we may notice the following particulars. 1. The metaphorical view in which the church is here repreſented, namely that of a houſe or building. 2. The character that our *Immanuel* bears, with reſpect to this building; he is the *Stone* in a way of eminence, without whom there can be no building, no houſe for God to dwell in among the children of men. 3. The character of the workmen imployed in this ſpiritual ſtructure, they are called *builders*. 4. A fatal error they are charged with in building of the houſe of God; they refuſe the ſtone of God's choiſing; they don't allow him a place in his own houſe. 5. Notice the place that Chriſt ſhould and ſhall have in this building, let the builders do their worſt, he *is made the head-ſtone of the Corner*. The words immediately following declare how this is effected, and how the ſaints are affected with the views of his exaltation, notwithſtanding of the malice of hell and earth, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes.*

In

In diſcourſing of this ſubject I ſhall juſt follow the order of the text now laid down, by explaining the particulars named, and then deduce a few inferences from the whole.

Firſt, Let us take a view of the church under the notion of a houſe or building. This metaphorical view of the church is very frequent in the ſcriptures, both of the Old and New Teſtament, *Iſa.* ii. 2, 3. *It ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, that the mountain of the houſe of the Lord ſhall be eſtabliſhed on the tops of the mountains, and many people ſhall ſay, Come ye, and let us go up to the Lord, to the houſe of the God of Jacob.* The ſame way of ſpeaking occurs alſo in the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament, 1 *Cor.* iii. 16. *Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* Hence *Paul* writting to *Timothy*, directs him how to *behave himſelf in the church of God, which is the houſe of the living God.*

Now with relation to this Houſe or Building, I offer the particulars following. 1. That tho' God took up houſe with Man at his creation; yet by the fall of *Adam* the family was skailt, God broke up houſe with man, the family was parted, and the breach was wide like the Sea. God could have no fellowſhip with man; for what fellowſhip could there be betwixt light and darkneſs, betwixt God and *Belial*; and immediately man, like the prodigal, forſook God, and wander'd into a far country of ſin and vanity.

2. God had a ſtated deſign from eternity, that notwithſtanding of this breach, he would have a houſe and dwelling with fallen man; he deſigned to take up houſe, and gather the family

mily again; thence we are told, that *before the foundation of the earth, he rejoiced in the habitable parts thereof, and his delights were with the ſons of men.* The foundation of this building was laid in the council of peace, and all the ſtones and materials of it were ſequeſtrate and ſet apart; from the ancient years of eternity, Chriſt was choſen as the foundation and the chief corner-ſtone. *I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, ere ever the earth was:* And all the ſaints were elected as living ſtones to be renewed, juſtified, adopted, ſanctified, and eternally ſaved in him and thro' him, *Eph.* i. 3. He hath choſen us in him, before the foundation of the world; he hath predeſtinated us into the adoption of children, to be holy and without blame before him in love.

3. Before this deſign'd building could go up, heaven muſt be at an infinite expence; before one ſtone could be laid in the building, the glory of the infinite God muſt be vail'd with a vail of fleſh in the perſon of the eternal Son; the great Lawgiver muſt be made under his own Law, God bleſſed for ever muſt be made a curſe, and the holy One of God made ſin. Juſtice had determined, that *without the ſhedding of blood there* ſhould be *no remiſſion of ſin*, and except juſtice was ſatisfied, and the honour of the Law repair'd, God could never dwell upon honourable terms with Man upon earth. Oh the expence that God is at in building this Houſe! We muſt be redeem'd from the hand of Juſtice, *not with ſilver and gold, or ſuch corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Chriſt*, &c.

4. Every

4. Every ſtone of this building is dig'd out of the deep and dark quarry of nature, being dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, children of wrath even as others, alienate from the life of God thro' ignorance, aliens to the common-wealth of *Iſrael*, ſtrangers to the covenants of promiſe. In a word, there is not worſe ſtuff in hell it ſelf, than the ſtones of this building are by Nature. And who can quarrel with the great builder for taking one ſtone out of the quarry and leaving another behind him as he has a mind: Only when we look to the rock whence we were hewen, and the pit whence we were dig'd, we may ſay, who made us to differ, for a *Syrian* ready to periſh was our father?

5. The great engine the glorious builder makes uſe of, for gathering the ſtones of the building and carrying on the edifice, is the pure preaching of the everlaſting goſpel; this is what the prophet *Iſa.* xxvii. 13. foretells: *And it ſhall come to paſs in that day, That the great trumpet ſhall be blown, and they that were ready to periſh in the land of Aſſyria, ſhall come and worſhip the Lord in the holy mount at Jeruſalem.* It pleaſes God, by the Fooliſhneſs of preaching to ſave them that believe. It is the goſpel that is the power of God unto ſalvation, for therein is reveal'd the righteouſneſs of God from faith to faith, *Rom.* i. 16. When Chriſt ſent forth his apoſtles and miniſters, as founders of the New Teſtament church, what were they to do? Their commiſſion was to go into all the world, and to preach the goſpel to every creature under heaven. *Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt.*

Hence the apoſtle declares, *Rom.* x. 4. the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty thro' God to the pulling down of ſtrong holds, caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it ſelf againſt the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Chriſt.

6. The Church thus gathered and united under Chriſt as a glorious Head is the houſe of God, or his family upon earth. He has a manifold right unto her: A right by election, a right by redemption and purchaſe, a right by covenant and by poſſeſſion. And if it is asked what kind of a houſe is the church of God? I anſwer (1.) It is his dwelling-houſe, *Pſal.* lxxvi. 2. *In Salem is his tabernacle and his dwelling place is in Sion.* God has no other reſt amongſt the children of men than his church. *The Lord hath choſen Sion, he hath deſired it for his habitation, this is my reſt, here will I dwell*; ſo that the tabernacle of God is with men: And as a man takes pleaſure in his houſe or lodging, ſo doth God take pleaſure in his church. The Lord taketh pleaſure in his people, he will beautify the meek with ſalvation. *I will dwell in them, I will walk in them, and I will be unto them a father, and they ſhall be my ſons and daughters ſaith the Lord God Almighty.* (2.) The church is his treaſure-houſe. Here it is that he diſpoſes of his moſt valuable furniture he hath in the world. *Iſrael* is his peculiar treaſure, the Lord's portion is his people, *Jacob* is the lot of his inheritance; here he hath his crown and diadem. Thou ſhalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Here he hath

his

his jewels as his people are called, *Mal.* iii. 16. In compariſon of whom all the reſt of the world are but traſh. What is the chaff to the wheat ſaith the Lord? Before he loſe his jewels and his portion, he will ſacrifice nations and kingdoms for their ſafety, *Iſa.* xliii. 4. Ever ſince thou waſt precious in my ſight, thou haſt been honourable, and I have loved thee: Therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life, *Egypt* for thy ranſom and *AEthiopia* and *Seba* for thee. (3.) The church is his banqueting-houſe, *Cant.* ii. 4. *He brought me into his banqueting-houſe and his banner over me was love.* Here it is he makes unto all people (in the external diſpenſation of the goſpel) a feaſt of fat things, of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees well refined: And here it is that the ſouls of believers are entertained with meat and drink indeed, the hidden *Manna*, and the fruits of the tree of life: And here it is that he himſelf is entertained with the graces of his own ſpirit, *Cant.* v. 1. *I am come into my garden, I have gathered my myrrh with my ſpices, I have eaten my honey comb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk.* Thus I ſay the church is the houſe of the living God.

8. As the church is the houſe of God or his family, ſo Chriſt is the only door of the houſe, *John* x. 9. *I am the door; by me, if any man enter, he ſhall be ſaved, and ſhall go in and out and find paſture, and he that entereth not by the door into the ſheep fold, but climbeth up ſome other way, the ſame is a thief and a robber.* No man can be reckoned a member of the church, far leſs a miniſter, no not in the judgment of cha-

nity, except he make a credible profeſſion of his faith in Chriſt, and have a correſponding walk and converſation; and he that comes into the houſe of God, and lays claim to the privileges of the church without it, the maſter of the houſe in his own time will ſay to him, *Friend how cameſt thou in hither?* And they who adventure to confer the privileges of the church upon theſe who have not come in by the door, Chriſt, and who in the view of the world, are of a malignant ſpirit, enemies to the houſe of our God; theſe, I ſay, are guilty of caſting that which is holy unto dogs, and of betraying the houſe of God, inſtead of ruling it to advantage.

9. Although this houſe or building be the object of the malice of hell and earth, yet, as it has ſtood ſince its erection in *Paradice*, ſo it ſhall ſtand while ſun and moon endures in the firmament. Indeed particular churches may be raz'd, but the catholick univerſal church ſhall ſtand the utmoſt efforts of the gates of hell; the Lord is in the midſt of her, ſhe ſhall not be moved; *the Lord will help her, and that right early.* Hence is that ſong, *Pſal.* xlvi. — *We will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midſt of the ſea*, &c. All the ſtorms that have blown upon her from hell and earth have only ſerved, by over-ruling providence, to advance her true intereſt and glory, *Iſa.* liv. 11, 12. *Oh thou afflicted, toſſed with tempeſt, and not comforted; behold I will lay thy ſtones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with Saphires.*

phires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleaſant ſtones.

The *Second* thing propoſed was to ſpeak a little here of the character given unto Chriſt, with relation to this building; he is the *ſtone*. There are a great many ſtones in a building, but in this ſpiritual building of the houſe of God, Chriſt is *the ſtone*, in a way of eminence and excellency, as if the whole building were of one piece, intimating that Chriſt and his church are ſo cloſely united as to become one body and one ſpirit; upon this account the whole building is called by the name of *Chriſt*, as the principal part thereof, 1 *Cor.* xii. 12. *As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, ſo alſo is Chriſt.* So *Jer.* xxxiii. 16.— *And this is the name wherewith he ſhall be called, viz.* the church, *The Lord our righteouſneſs*; the very name given unto Chriſt himſelf, *Chap.* xxiii. *ver.* 6. I conceive that Chriſt is called the ſtone here, for the ſame reaſon, that he elſewhere calls himſelf a Rock, *Upon this rock will I build my church*, to intimate that he is the ſtrength and ſtability of his church. Now the excellency and neceſſity of this ſtone, to the rearing and building of the houſe of God, will appear if we conſider.

1. That he is the ſtone of God's chuſing, 2 *Pet* i. 4. *Choſen of God and precious.* Iſa. xlii. 1. *Behold my ſervant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my ſoul delighteth. Fore ordained before the foundation of the world.*

2. He

2. He is the ſtone of God's approbation, *Tho' he be diſallowed of men*, he had his Father's teſtimony from heaven with an audible voice, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed*: And, as he is approved of God, ſo he is approven of by every wiſe builder; they'll be ready to ſay with *Paul*, *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners.*

3. He is the ſtone of God's trying, *Iſa.* xxviii. 16. *I lay in Zion a ſtone, a tried ſtone*; he was tried in the furnace of his Father's wrath, and he abode the trial, for he came forth more glorious than ever, in his reſurrection from the dead. He ſtood the trial of the rage of men and devils, who endeavoured to ſtop him in his redeeming work. All the ſaints in heaven, and all believers on earth, have tried him, and will give him this teſtimony, that he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt.

4. He is the only living and life-giving ſtone, 1 *Pet.* ii. 4. *To whom coming as to a living ſtone.* As the Father hath life in himſelf, ſo hath he given to the Son to have life in himſelf. He is the reſurrection and the life, and all the ſtones of the building derive their life from him. 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. *Ye alſo as lively ſtones are built up a ſpiritual houſe. He that hath the Son hath life; our life is hid with Chriſt in God.*

5. He is the ſtone that is laid by the hand of *Jehovah* as a foundation in *Zion*. *Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a ſtone, a tried ſtone, a ſure foundation*, Iſa. xxviii. 16. He was laid decretively from eternity; He is laid doctrinally and declaratively in a preached Goſpel: And he

he is laid efficaciouſly in a day of power, when the ſinner is by the power of the eternal Spirit determined to take hand upon him by faith; he is laid a foundation, and the only foundation of hope and help for periſhing ſinners. Men have been tryed in all ages to lay other foundations, but ſtill they have proven foundations of ſand, another foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, Chriſt Jeſus. They who attempt to rear a church without Chriſt, or to build up to themſelves a hope of ſalvation without him, have only built caſtles in the air, and their building always turned to nought.

6. He is the matchleſs and incomparable ſtone, for he is *the chief ſtone of the corner*, the brightneſs of his father's glory is in him, and the expreſs image of his perſon. All created glory ſhrinks into nothing and darkneſs, when he appears, for he is fairer than the children of men, as the apple tree among the trees of the wood; and he caſts a luſtre and glory on the whole building and every ſtone in it, for we are beautiful thro' his comlineſs; the beauty of the Lord is upon his ſaints.

The *Third* Thing to be diſcourſed a little, was in the workmen employed in rearing this ſpiritual building or fabrick of the church, here call'd *Builders*. Chriſt himſelf is the principal builder to whom the work is committed, *Zech.* vi. 22. *Behold the Man whoſe name is the Branch, he ſhall come out of his place, and build the temple, even he ſhall build the temple and bear the glory*: But he employs officers under him for the on-carrying of the work, and theſe are called builders. Kings, and thoſe in civil authority, when in their ſphere they

they lend their helping hand to advance and carry on the work of God, may be called builders of the church; but under the New Teſtament I find this term only apply'd to miniſters of the Goſpel, ordinary or extraordinary, *Eph.* iv. 11, 12. *He gave ſome apoſtles and prophets, and ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers.* For what end? *It is for the edification of the church*, or building the Body of Chriſt; and 2 *Cor.* iii. 10. *Paul* declareth there, that according to the grace given him, he as a wiſe maſter-builder, had laid the foundation. So that miniſters of the goſpel are eſpecially the New-Teſtament builders.

Now with relation to theſe, there are only theſe few things I ſuggeſt. 1. 'Tis a very honourable employment, to be a builder of the houſe of God; it is an employment wherein the Son of God as mediator is engag'd; and is it not an honour, to be co-workers with him? *David* eſteem'd it an honour to be a door-keeper in the houſe of our God; but it is yet more ſo to be a builder of the houſe. And as the work is honourable, ſo the reward of grace is proportioned; for if we keep the charge committed to us in building the houſe of God, we ſhall have place among them that ſtand by the heavenly throne, and they that be wiſe ſhall ſhine like the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever.

2. None can warrantably lay a ſtone in this building, except he be regularly called. What maſon will put his hand to a building, unleſs he be imployed by theſe who have warrant to call him? This is ſuch a neceſſary circumſtance, that

that Chriſt himſelf would not meddle with building his Father's houſe till he had his Father's call. *No man taketh this honour to himſelf, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So likewiſe Chriſt glorified not himſelf to be made an high prieſt, but he that ſaid to him, thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee*, Heb. v. 4, 5. There is a twofold call neceſſary for a man who meddles as a builder in the church of God, there is the call of God, and of the church. God's call conſiſts, in his qualifying a man for the work, and inſpiring him with a holy zeal and deſire, to employ theſe qualifications for the glory of God and the good of his church. — The call of the church lies in the free choice and election of the chriſtian people. The promiſe of conduct and counſel in the choice of men that are to build the church is not made to patrons, heritors, or any other particular ſet of men, but to the church, the body of Chriſt, to whom apoſtles, prophets, evangeliſts, paſtors and teachers are given. As it is a natural privilege of every houſe or ſociety of men to have the choice of their own ſervants or officers, ſo 'tis the privilege of the houſe of God in a particular manner. What a miſerable bondage would it be reckoned for any family to have ſtewards or ſervants impoſed upon them by ſtrangers or enemies, who might give the children of the family *a ſtone for bread*, or a *ſcorpion inſtead of a fiſh*, and poiſon inſtead of medicine? And ſhall we ſuppoſe, that ever God granted to any ſet of men, patrons, heritors, elders or whatever they be, a power to impoſe ſervants on his family, without their conſent, being the freeſt ſociety in the world? But

I paſs this at preſent; perhaps more of it may occur afterwards*.

3. The builders of the houſe of God are not left to form or mould the houſe according to their own fancy; no, but they muſt follow the pattern ſhewed in the holy mount of divine revelation.

When the tabernacle was reared, a plat-form of it was given to *Moſes*. When the temple was to be built, a pattern of it was given to *Solomon* by his father, and every pin of the tabernacle, and every ſtone of the temple was to be regulated and diſpoſed according to the divine order: Now theſe were but types of the New Teſtament building, whereof we now ſpeak. Who builds a houſe without forming a plan of it to the builders? Who erects a ſociety without giving orders about its government? They who aſſert the government of the church to be ambulatory, caſt a reflection on the wiſdom of God, which is not to be ſuppoſed of any wiſe man whatever. Now I ſay, as builders of a houſe muſt renounce their own ſchemes, and follow the orders of the owner, ſo miniſters and church officers in building the houſe of God, muſt renounce carnal policy and the wiſdom of the world, and follow the orders given by God in his word, the perfect rule of faith and manners both to miniſters and church members. What the particular model of the church ſhould be, is a thing I hope beyond controverſy amongſt us who are ſo ſolemnly engag'd to maintain the doctrine, diſcipline, worſhip and government of this church; and therefore I don't enter upon it now.

4. God has endowed men whom he calls to build his houſe, with different talents and abi-

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lities, according to the different ſervices they are to be employed about in the work. There are a great variety of gifts beſtowed by Chriſt upon his miniſters, all calculate for the good of the church of God in general: The apoſtle illuſtrates this argument at great length, 1 *Cor.* xii. thro' the whole of the chapter. If this were but duly conſidered, it would cure all manner of ſtrife and emulation among the builders, that they ſhould not grudge one againſt another.

5. The gifts of men, however edifying or well adapted, for carrying on the work, will never do ſervice without the bleſſing and countenance of the great Maſter builder. *Paul may plant and Appollos water, but God giveth the increaſe;* and 'tis well that it is ſo ordered of infinite wiſdom, that men may not give greater glory to inſtruments than is due, and that the whole glory may redound to the Lord; for this end, he puts the treaſure in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the power may be of him.

6. The work of God is many times exceedingly marred, thro' the weakneſs or wickedneſs of pretended builders. But this leads me to the

Fourth Thing propoſed, which was to ſpeak of the fatal error of theſe builders ſpoken of in my text: They reject the ſtone, without which their whole building was nothing but a medly of confuſion, however glorious it might appear in their own eyes. *The ſtone is rejected by the builders.*

They ſeem'd to have a great zeal for the Meſſiah and his kingdom; yet when he comes, they don't allow him a room in his own houſe. *He came to his own and his own received him*

not, and so they fulfilled *Isaiah*'s prediction of him, *Isa.* liii. 2. *He hath no form or comliness in him, when we shall see him there is no beauty why we should desire him.* He is despised and rejected of men. And because they rejected him, he hath rejected them as a church and nation; and oh! how happy had it been if their error and ruin thereupon had served as a beacon to other churches since their day, not to dash upon the same rock. But here a question naturally arises,

How did the *Jewish* builders reject the stone which God had ordained to be the chief-stone of the corner? *Answer*, This came about through a great many corruptions which they introduced both in principle and in practice. I shall only name a few of them, and leave it to every one to judge how far such evils or corruptions are to be found in our own day.

1. Tho' they pretended a great regard unto the holy law of God, and cry'd out upon Christ and his apostles as enemies to it, yet they narrowed and contracted the sense and meaning of it, confining it meerly to the letter, without searching into its extent and spirituality which gave occasion unto Christ's sermon on the mount. By these means, tho' their hearers might have some notions of moral honesty, yet could they have no notion of the depravation of nature, and of the deceit and desperate wickedness of their hearts, without which no man can ever know the need he has of the work of regeneration, or of a Saviour from sin.

2. Having pared off the spiritual meaning of the law, they sought justification by the works thereof, and thought a man's own personal ob

dience

dience enough to recommend him to God; as is clear from *Rom.* ix. 31. *Iſrael which followed after the law of righteouſneſs, hath not attained unto the law of righteouſneſs. Wherefore? Becauſe they ſought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they ſtumbled at that ſtumbling ſtone.* And *Rom.* x. 3. *For they being ignorant of the righteouſneſs of God, and going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, have not ſubmitted to the righteouſneſs of God.* They could frame no notion to themſelves of juſtification by the imputed righteouſneſs of the *Meſſiah*, tho' God had told them that their righteouſneſs and their works could not profit them, that it was a bed too ſhort, and a covering too narrow for them.

3. Theſe builders, thro' the legality of their doctrine, ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt men; they would neither enter themſelves, nor ſuffer others that were entering to enter. God had told them that the bleſſings of his covenant muſt be had without money, or price; but they would needs pawn their legal qualifications upon God, and barter the matter with him; and thus, inſtead of caſting out the ſtones, or preparing the way of the people, *Iſa.* lxii. 10. they threw ſtones and ſtumbling blocks in the way of the ſalvation of ſinners by the *Meſſiah*.

4. Theſe builders deadned the ordinances of God by their formality. Tho' they retained the ſhell of ordinances, they never regarded the end, either with reſpect to their own ſouls, or the ſouls of their people, which was fellowſhip and communion with God therein; for which reaſon God declareth his abhorence of his own inſtitutions, *Iſa.* i. 11, 12. &c. *To what purpoſe are the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me,*

me, ſaith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beaſts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats, &c. One of the great ſources of this evil was, that if a man had beeen trained up at the feet of *Gamaliel* for a few years, and got a ſmake of the learning then in vogue, it was enough in their opinion to qualify him for being a builder in the houſe of God, tho' in the mean time he was an utter ſtranger to the work of God on his ſoul; as is evident from the inſtance of *Nicodemus*, who when Chriſt tries him upon the head of regeneration, he bables and ſpeaks nonſenſe. *John* iii. 4. *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a ſecond time into his mother's belly and be born.* Hence is that ſharp challenge, *ver.* 9. *Art thou a maſter of Iſrael and knoweſt not theſe things.* There Chriſt ſpeaks of it as a thing criminal, that men ſhould be made teachers of the church, who were ſtrangers to a work of grace; for what but dead formal worſhip could be performed by men *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.*

5. They were continually dabling in politicks, and gave themſelves up to the conduct of carnal wiſdom and policy in the matters of God and of his church, and thro' this carnal wiſdom, they were led on to crucify the Lord of glory. *'Tis expedient that one man die for the people; and if he be not taken out of the way, the world will go after him, and ſo the Romans ſhall come and take away our kingdom!* When once a church comes to ſtand upon the rotten prop of carnal wiſdom and policy, ſhe's near unto ruin. 'Tis true, miniſters are to be wiſe as ſerpents; but the wiſdom of the ſerpent will ſoon lead us

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off our feet unto pernicious courſes, if not attended with the ſimplicity of the dove; and therefore we need, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we ſhould have our converſation in this world.

+ 6. The *Jewiſh* builders valued themſelves exceedingly upon their connection with the rulers and great folk in that day, and having join'd intereſts with them, treated the common people, eſpecially thoſe who owned Chriſt, and attended his miniſtry and that of his apoſtles as an unhallowed mob; as is clear from *John* vii from *ver.* 45. and downward, where they having ſent ſome of their officers to apprehend Chriſt, the officers return, declaring that *never man ſpake like this man*; to which the *Phariſees* reply, *Are ye alſo deceived? Have any of the rulers or Phariſees believed on him: But this people who know not the law are accurſed.* As if the common people had been obliged to follow them, and the rulers with whom they connect themſelves, by an implicite faith and obedience, without ever bringing their doctrine and actings to the bar of the law and teſtimony, to be tried there*.

7. They and the rulers have got the aſcendant in the ſanhedrim, and other courts they took care to keep the power upon their ſide, by bringing in none but men of their own ſtamp and ſpirit, and if any man adventure to open his mouth, or teſtify againſt their corruptions in principles or practice, preſently combinations are form'd, plots are laid, and the edge of the church's diſcipline, which they had graſped,

is turned againſt them as a turbulent perſon, an enemy to the law and temple; as is clear from their management with Chriſt, his apoſtles and the protomartyr *Stephen*. But yet, notwithſtanding of their pretended regard to the temple, they admitted the buyers and ſellers to enter into it, whereby they turned that holy place into a den of thieves, as Chriſt tells them to their face, *John* ii. 16. and *Mat.* xxi. 13. and whatever regard they pretended to the law, by a ſhew of ſanctity before the world, yet they abandoned themſelves to all manner of ſecret and heart wickedneſs. Hence our Lord compares them unto *painted ſepulchres*; glorious without, but within full of dead mens bones and rottenneſs, *Mat.* xxiii. 27.

Again, however careful they were to cloak and palliat their ſecret wickedneſs, yet now and then it was breaking out, to the great ſcandal and offence of the poor people of God, by which means they made themſelves contemptible, and cauſed many to ſtumble at the law, and abhor the ſacrifices of the Lord, as adminiſtrate by them. As is plain from *Mal.* ii. 8, 9. *Ye are departed out of the way, ye have cauſed many to ſtumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, ſaith the Lord of hoſts. Therefore have I alſo made you contemptible and baſe before all the people, according as ye have not keept my ways, but have been partial in the law.*

Having loſt the hearts of the people by theſe means, they gave themſelves up to all manner of ſloth and indolence, taking care to feed their own bellies, and enrich themſelves with the good of this world, while in the mean time they

entirely neglected the flock and heritage of God. Hence is that charge againſt them, by the prophet *Iſaiah* lvi. 10, 11. *His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, ſleeping, lying down, loving to ſlumber. Yea they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are ſhepherds that cannot underſtand: They all look to their own way, for his gain, every one from his quarter: Come ye, ſay they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill our ſelves with ſtrong drink, and to morrow ſhall be as this day, and much more abundant.*

Thoſe *Jewiſh* rulers ruled the Lord's people with rigour, invaded their freedoms and liberties, bound heavy burdens on them, which they themſelves will not touch with one of their fingers; and by this means the Lord's people were ſcattered from the worſhip of God in their ſynagogues, as ſheep having no ſhepherd. Hence is that plain dealing by the prophet *Ezekiel* xxxiv. from ver. 2. to 6. *Thus ſaith the Lord God unto the ſhepherds, Wo be to the ſhepherds of Iſrael, that do feed themſelves; ſhould not the ſhepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye cloath you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock. The diſeaſed have ye not ſtrengthned, neither have ye healed that which was ſick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye ſought that which was loſt; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were ſcattered, becauſe there was no ſhepherd; and they became meat to all the beaſts of the field, when they were ſcattered. My ſheep wandred thro' all the mountains, and*

upon every high hill; yea my flock was ſcattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did ſearch or ſeek after them.

In ſhort, to ſuch a degree of corruption were they arrived, that the holy and prophane, the clean and unclean were alike to them, provided they were of their way and party, *Ezek.* xxii. 25, 26. *There is a conſpiracy of her prophets in the midſt thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured ſouls, they have taken the treaſure and precious things, they have made her many widows in the midſt thereof. Her prieſts have violated* (as in the original, offered violence) *to my law, and have prophaned mine holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and prophane; neither have they ſhewed difference between the unclean and the clean.*

Thus the *Jewiſh* church, and particularly her pretended builders, we ſee were ſunk into the very dregs of corruption; and hence it came, that when the glorious and long-looked-for Meſſiah actually appeared among them, upon the Stage of this world, inſtead of giving him a reception ſuitable to his excellency, as *Immanuel* God-Man, they treated him with the utmoſt contempt. Tho' he opened his commiſſion, and made it evident to the world, by his doctrine, miracles, and the whole of his converſation, that he has none other than the brightneſs of his Father's glory, yet they diſparaged his perſon, denied his ſupreme Deity, eſteeming him only as the ſon of the carpenter; contradicted his doctrine, and ſtudied to obſcure his miracles, by aſcribing them to the power of *Belzebub* the prince of devils: They blackned his character

racter with reproaches, as tho' he had been a glutton, a wine-biber, a friend of publicans and ſinners, and at length crucified him ignominiouſly, as tho' he had been a notorious impoſtor, betwixt two thieves; and when, after his reſurrection from the dead, he came to them in the miniſtry of his apoſtles, bringing his righteouſneſs and ſalvation near unto them, they finally rejected him and all the offers of his grace; for which reaſon, God was provoked, by a heavy ſentence of excommunication, to cut them off from being a church or nation, under which they are lying to this day, his blood being *upon them and upon their children*, according to their wiſh at his crucifixion. And thus we ſee how the ſtone of God's chuſing was *rejected by the builders*. Let their example and ruin ſerve as ſo many beacons, that we of the *Gentile* churches may not daſh our ſelves upon the ſame church-ruining and ſoul-deſtroying rocks; which is the very uſe the apoſtle *Paul* makes of this ſubject, when writing to the *Romans*, *Chap.* xi. *ver.* 20, 21, 22. *Well; becauſe of unbelief they were broken off, and thou ſtandeſt by faith. Be not high minded, but fear. For if God ſpared not the natural branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee: Behold therefore the goodneſs and ſeverity of God; on them which fell, ſeverity; but towards thee goodneſs, if thou continue in his goodneſs: Otherwiſe thou alſo ſhalt be cut off.* Which melancholy event actually happened unto the Church of Chriſt at *Rome*, as we ſee at this very day, it being now the ſeat of antichriſt, and a ſynagogue of ſatan.

The only thing remains upon this head, is to anſwer the following queſtion.

Whence was it that the *Jewiſh* builders rejected Chriſt the ſtone of God's chuſing, trying and laying? *Anſ.* 1. This fatal error of theirs proceeded from their ignorance of Chriſt, in the excellency of his perſon, and of the glorious myſtery of redemption and ſalvation through him, *Acts* iii. 7. *I wot that thro' ignorance ye did it, as did alſo your rulers*; 1 Cor ii. 7, 8. *We ſpeak the wiſdom of God in a myſtery, which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* They were men of no deſpicable parts, capable enough to toſs an argument; they thought themſelves the only *ſeers* in *Iſrael* in their day. *Are we blind alſo?* Yet Chriſt declares them blind like moles, in things relating to his kingdom. The leaſt of Chriſt's babes, whom they reckoned among the accurſed mob, had more of the ſaving knowledge of God, and of the things of God, than they; and the blind leading the blind both ſtumbled on the ſtumbling ſtone, and fell into the ditch together. 2. Miſtaken notions of the nature of the *Meſſiah*'s kingdom was another cauſe of their rejecting this precious ſtone. They had formed a notion to themſelves, without any real ground from ſcripture-prophecy, that the *Meſſiah* was to appear in the form of an earthly monarch, and that he was to lift up the head of the *Jewiſh* nation, and make the *Romans*, and all the nations of the world, their vaſſals and tributaries; but finding themſelves miſtaken, they diſown and crucify him, as an impoſtor. Which by the by, ſerves to diſcover what a dangerous thing it is, not to have right conceptions of the ſpiritual nature of Chriſt's kingdom.

kingdom. — I'm perſwaded that carnal notions of the kingdom of Chriſt, which is not of this world, ly at the bottom of many of the evils and corruptions in the day we live in *.

The *Fifth* thing in the method was to enquire what may be implied in Chriſt's being *made the head-ſtone of the corner*, notwithſtanding of the attempts of the builders to juſtle him out of his place?

1. Then it implies Chriſt's exaltation and victory over all his enemies and oppoſers; he will have the better of them, let them do their worſt: However Chriſt and his cauſe, intereſt and people, may be born down for a while, yet the ſcales will turn, and like the houſe of *David* they ſhall prevail. Chriſt was perſonally oppreſſed and afflicted, *he drank of the brook in the way.* Yet at length *he lifted up the head*, and *God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name.* And as it was with Chriſt perſonal, ſo will it be with his injured members. However they be *afflicted, toſſed with tempeſts and not comforted, yet God will lay their ſtones with fair colours, and their foundations with ſapphires.* Tho' *Sion* may be laid in aſhes, yet ſhe ſhall be built up again *by the almighty God*: And when the Lord brings her forth to the light, then *Shame ſhall cover her who ſaid, Where is the Lord thy God?*

2. It implies, that God has a great regard for the glory of his Son, as the head and king of his church, and that it is his will that *all men* ſhould *honour him, as they honour the Father.* This was intimated by a royal mandate, iſſued forth from the excellent glory. *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed, hear*

hear ye him. God does not reckon it any injury done to him as God creator, that we worſhip and ſerve him in the perſon of the redeemer, for *his name is in him*; his glory, his majeſty and other excellent perfections are in him as they are in the father; and therefore it is his will, *That at the name of Jeſus, every knee ſhould bow, and every tongue confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

3. It implies, that the whole ſpiritual fabrick or building of the church hangs upon him, as the ſuperſtructure leans upon the foundation and chief corner ſtone. *He ſhall build the temple and bear the glory*, ſays the prophet *Zechariah*, and *Iſa.* xxii. 24. *They ſhall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's houſe.* All the doctrines of the church, and truths of the everlaſting goſpel lean upon him: He is their *Alpha* and *Omega*. Hence we read of *the truth as it is in Jeſus*, they meet in him as the ſpakes of a wheel in the Nive. All the promiſes meet in him, *they are in him yea and amen.* All the precepts lean upon his authority, for the law is the law of Chriſt, it is his *yoke and burden.* The whole diſcipline of the church hangs upon him: The keys of doctrine and diſcipline hang at his girdle. The government of the church pertains to him; for it is laid upon his ſhoulders. The ordinances and worſhip of the church hang on him; no ſort of worſhip or a part of worſhip can be admitted, but what bears the impreſſion of his inſtitution. The officers of the church hang upon him for their commiſſion and ſucceſs in their work. In a word, all the members of the church hang upon him. *The whole offspring and iſſue, the veſſels of ſmall quantity*

quantity, from veſſels of cups to veſſels of flagons, hang on him, as upon a nail faſtned in a ſure place.

4. His being made the head-ſtone of the corner implies, that he is the alone center of unity in the church, for the head-ſtone of the corner knits the whole building together, and if that be removed, the walls of the houſe fall aſunder, and ſo the whole fabrick is ruined. If we don't hold the head-ſtone of the corner, by which *the whole building is ſupplied and knit together*, the fabrick of a church, however politically fram'd, can never ſtand long. And the reaſon why the houſe is tottering at this day, is becauſe there is too much of a receding from the corner ſtone. Uſually indeed in a time of defection, the pulpits of theſe builders whoſe hands are deepeſt in it, ring with the doctrine of peace, and if a tongue be moved againſt the corrupt meaſures they are going into, the cry is raiſed, *Theſe that turn the world upſide down, are come hither alſo*; while in the mean time it is ſuch as depart from the corner-ſtone, that ruin and tear the building, and not they who give warning to the houſe or family of its being in danger of falling. They who do give warning may lay their account to be beaten by their fellow-builders, that are loſing the corner-ſtone. But this needs be no ſurpriſe, for in all ages Chriſt's witneſſes have tormented them that dwell upon the earth; and it needs be no diſcouragement, for tho' they may be killed and buried, yet there will be a reſurrection both of names and perſons.

5. His being the head-ſtone of the corner implies, that Chriſt is the beauty and ornament of

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his church, for much of the beauty and ornament of the building lies in the corner ſtone: We are told, *the daughters of Zion were like a corner-ſtone, poliſhed after the ſimilitude of a palace. Chriſt is the glory of his people Iſrael*, and no wonder, for *he is the brightneſs of his Father's glory*. When he is in the midſt of his church, countenancing his ordinances and judicatories, then it is, *ſhe looks forth as the morning, fair as the ſun, and clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners*: But when he departs, all the glory departs, and a diſmal *Ichabod* ſucceeds. *Yea, wo alſo unto them when I depart from them*: As may be ſeen at this day in the once famous churches of Leſſer *Aſia*, and other places where Chriſt had once flouriſhing churches. They departed from the chief corner-ſtone in doctrine, diſcipline, worſhip and government, and this provoked him to depart, and upon his departure the ſongs of their temples were turned into howlings.

6. It implies, that they who would build the church of Chriſt muſt ſtill have him in their eye, and that the whole of their conduct and adminiſtration in the houſe of God muſt be regulate with a view to his glory and honour. If in building a houſe, the chief corner-ſtone be not keept in view, irregular work can't miſs to enſue: Juſt ſo is it in the caſe in hand; if we ſhall pretend to build the houſe of God, and do not keep our eyes on Chriſt, and his honour and intereſt, whether in matters of diſcipline or doctrine, inſtead of building the church, we do but diſorder and diſturb it, and throw all unto confuſion; when we begin to work by carnal policy, or to have a ſquint eye upon ſerving the

luſts

luſts and humours of men, great or ſmall, or our own worldly intereſts, and not the glory of our great Redeemer, we but ruin and pull down the church of Chriſt, inſtead of building it, and are fair to bury our name, our miniſtry, and our own ſouls, and the ſouls of multitudes, in the rubbiſh of it. Therefore there is much need of diſintereſted views in the management of the affairs of Chriſt. We that are miniſters, as well as others, had much need to learn the leſſon of ſelf-denial: To deny our own wiſdom and our worldly intereſt as a triffle in reſpect of his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom.

7. The Text implies that God and corrupt builders are driving quite different meaſures and deſigns. The builders reject the ſtone, but God will have it to be the head-ſtone of the corner, and which of the parties ſhall prevail 'tis eaſy to judge. *Chriſt ſhall ſit at his Father's right hand, till all his enemies be made his footſtool.* He will break them that riſe up againſt him, *as a potter's veſſel. I have ſet my King*, ſays the Lord, *upon my holy hill of Sion*; and who is he that will dethrone him?

What was laſt propoſed in the method was the *application* of the whole. All the uſe I ſhall make of what has been ſaid, ſhall be wrapt up in the following inferences.

Firſt, From what has been ſaid, we may ſee the excellency of the church of Chriſt; why ſhe is a building, an houſe for God to dwell in among the children of men. So valuable is this building, that this whole viſible creation is only a theatre or ſcaffold for rearing the houſe, and whenever the building is compleated, the

ſcaffold will be taken down and committed to the flames. To diſcover the high eſtimate God puts upon his church, he calls her by the moſt endearing names and epithets. He deſigns her *his ſpouſe, his love, his dove, his undefiled, his treaſure, his portion, his Hephzibah and Beulah, his bed*, his reſting-place, his walking place, and his dwelling place. A whole Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt lay themſelves out in their particular œconomy for the up-building of this houſe: The grace of the Father, the love and blood of the Son, and all the gracious influences and operations of the Holy Ghoſt are laid out for carrying on the work. The whole adminiſtrations of providence in the government of the world are adjuſted for the benefit of the church, and the faithful members thereof. For this end the reins of adminiſtration, the keys of hell and death, were committed into the hands of Chriſt; *For God hath given him to be head over all things unto the church, which is his body.* The Father hath put all things into the hand of the Son, that ſo all the wheels of providence might be roll'd, and turn'd about *for the good of them that love him, and who are the called according to his purpoſe.* The whole inſtitution and adminiſtration of goſpel-ordinances, and all the officers of his ordination, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are deſign'd for her edification, as we ſee in that forecited, *Eph.* iv. 11, 12, 13, *&c.* This may let us ſee, what a valuable truſt we have among our hands, to whom God has committed the affairs of the church, and how tenderly it concerns us to manage them, even like thoſe who are to make an account to the great Lord of the houſe.

Inf-

Inf. 2. Is Chriſt *the ſtone* in a way of eminence? Then we may ſee how neceſſary and uſeful it is to preach Chriſt; why he is *the ſtone* by way of eminence, the ſtone of God's laying, of his chooſing, and the ſtone which God will have for *the head-ſtone of the corner*. *Paul*, as a wiſe maſter-builder, laid this foundation among his hearers, and declares that *another foundation can no man lay*. It is Chriſt whom we preach. *I deſire*, ſays he, *to know nothing among you, but Chriſt and him crucified*. The whole of the ſcripture revelation meets in him as its centre: All the hiſtories, prophecies, promiſes, types, precepts, doctrines and ordinances of the word, they are juſt full of Chriſt. The whole bible, what is it, but the Teſtament of Chriſt and the Teſtimonial that Chriſt brought from heaven. *Theſe are they that teſtify of me. Theſe things are writen that ye may believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in him.* And to be ſure what is the ſcope of the whole revelation of the mind of God in the word, ought to be the ſcope and deſign of all our ſermons. Whatever particular doctrines we inſiſt upon, ought ſtill to be grafted upon the bleſſed Branch that ſprings out of the root of *Jeſſe*, for the truth is only right diſpenſed, and right known as it is in Jeſus. Hence the great Mr. *Durham* tells us, in his firſt ſermon on *Iſa.* liii. 'That Chriſt ſtands 'under a four-fold relation to preaching, 1. He 'is the text of it; all preaching is to explain 'him, and that preaching that does not ſtand 'in relation to him, is a preaching beſides the 'text. 2. He is the ground-work and foundation

'of preaching, ſo that preaching without him 'wants a foundation, and is but building caſtles in 'the air. 3. He is the great end of preaching, 'namely, to ſet him on high in the hearts and 'affections of our hearers. This deſign of 'preaching is not to make out ſelves, but our 'maſter, great, to cauſe his name to be remem-'bred. 4. He is the very power and life of 'preaching, *for he is the power of God and the 'wiſdom of God, and* the goſpel is called *the 'power of God unto ſalvation, becauſe therein 'is revealed the righteouſneſs of God from faith 'to faith.* Thus far that great man.

Inf. 3. If the miniſters of the goſpel be buil-ders of the houſe, then ſee hence the need of trying a man's acquaintance with Chriſt and the power of religion, before he is admitted unto miniſterial communion, as a fellow-builder in the houſe of God. Why that man who is not really acquainted with Chriſt in an experimen-tal way, may be fair to reject the ſtone of God's chuſing, and ſo ruine the building, and bury himſelf and many ſouls in the ruins of it. Ma-ſons know one another, they have certain ſigns and words by which they are capable to diſtin-guiſh men of their own art and buſineſs from o-thers; ſo skilful builders in the houſe of God are capable, by a ſpiritual diſcerning, to know who are fit for being admitted to the work of the Lord, and who not. If ſuch a diſcerning be given, even unto church members, as to *try the ſpirits whether they be of God, becauſe many falſe prophets are gone abroad in the world*, 1 John iv. 1. much more may it be ſuppoſed, that this diſcerning faculty is to be found among faithful miniſters of the goſpel. Hence is

that

that of the apoſtle to *Timothy*, 2 epiſtle ii. 2. *The things that thou haſt heard of me among many witneſſes, the ſame commit thou to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo.*

Inf. 4. Is it ſo that the ſtone is rejected by the builders? Then ſee hence what a fatal and pernicious thing a corrupt, erroneous and ignorant miniſtry is to the church of Chriſt: Why, they ſpoil, mar and deſtroy the whole building; they run counter to the great plot of heaven by caſting away the ſtone, which God has ordained to be the chief ſtone of the corner. The new mode of preaching ſome men have fallen unto, with their harangues and flouriſhes of morality, while Chriſt is ſcarce named, from the beginning to the end of their diſcourſe, I look on as a plot of hell to throw out the corner-ſtone, in order to bring us back into heathniſh or antichriſtian darkneſs. *Chriſt is the light of the world*, and if he be removed, or ſhuffled out, where are we, but juſt among the *dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of horrid cruelty*? So that I ſay, a corrupt miniſtry, what ever be their fine parts, are the very bane of the church of Chriſt.

Inf. 5. If it be God's great deſign, that Chriſt ſhould be the chief ſtone of the corner; if this, I ſay, be the reſolution of heaven: Then ſee hence, that all the attempts of hell for the depreſſing of Chriſt and the ruin of his cauſe, whether by open enemies, or pretended builders, ſhall be abortive in the iſſue. *For the counſel of the Lord ſhall ſtand, and he will do all his pleaſure*, in ſpite of hell and earth. And what is his pleaſure and counſel? Why, here it is, *The*

ſtone

ſtone which the builders rejected, the ſame ſhall become the head-ſtone of the corner. The gates of hell have made many an attempt to get the ſtone of God's chuſing rejected, in order to the ruine of the church, but they have never yet prevailed, and never ſhall: Infinite wiſdom hath always taken *the wiſe in their own craftineſs, and turned the counſel of the froward headlong*, and made theſe very devices of hell and its inſtruments ſubſervient to lift the corner-ſtone higher in the building, to the ſhame and ruin of theſe who attempted to reject it. This *little ſtone cut out of the mountain*, hath always prov'd too hard for all the mettals that claſht with it, and it will be ſo to the end of time.

Inſer. 6. See from what is ſaid, what it is makes a flouriſhing church. It is not her external peace, plenty or proſperity; not her connection in politicks with kings or parliaments, patrons, heritors or any other ſet of men; but her connection with the chief corner-ſtone. This and this only is what beautifies the whole building, and makes her *increaſe with the increaſe of God.*

Infer. 7. See hence great ground of lamentation and humiliation at this day. The ſtone is rejected, which God would have to be the chief ſtone of the corner: Is he not rejected in his prophetical office thro' the prevailing ignorance and unbelief, that is to be found among the hearers of the goſpel? The old complaint may ſtill be renewed in our day, *who hath believed our report?* Is he not rejected in his prieſtly office, while the generality, with the *Jews, go about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs*

neſs, and refuſe the righteouſneſs of God? And is he not rejected in his kingly office and headſhip in his church, by the abounding prophanity, atheiſm and immorality of our day; the generality of profeſſed chriſtians their breaking his bands, and caſting his cords from them? I cannot now ſtand to give a full narrative of the injuries have been done to the royal prerogative of this King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The *Roman* antichriſt has for a long time invaded the prerogative of the Son of God, by uſurping a headſhip over the church; *He ſits in the temple of God, exalting himſelf above all that is called God.* At the imperfect reformation of *England*, when they threw off the Pope as head of the church, they lodged the ſame in the king, declaring him to be ſupream head in all caſes civil or eccleſiaſtick. In the late days of *Scotland*'s apoſtacy from God, the crown was ſacrilegiouſly taken from Chriſt's head among us alſo, and ſet upon the head of a perſecuting apoſtate. Dreadful were the invaſions and incroachments that were made upon the crown royal of the King of *Zion*, by king, parliaments, and perſons of all ranks; particularly by the act reſciſſory, whereby axes and hammers were lifted up upon the carved work of the temple, hewing down the glorious work of reformation, reſtoring abjured prelacy, reſcinding the obligations of our ſolemn covenants, yea ordering them to be burnt at the croſs of *Edinburgh*, by the hand of the common hangman, proſecuting to the very death all that owned a work of reformation.

In

In theſe bloody days, the headſhip and ſovereignty of Chriſt was contended for, by many of the Lord's worthies even unto death; and it has been the peculiar honour of the church of *Scotland*, particularly in theſe days of perſecution, to bear teſtimony unto Chriſt, as the alone head and king of his church, in oppoſition unto theſe dangerous and heaven-daring encroachments that were made upon it. And it is much to be regreted and lamented, that ſince the Lord turned back our captivity, in any meaſure, at the late wonderful revolution, whereby we were freed from the yoke of lordly prelacy, we have not been ſo zealous for our great King and his prerogatives, which were ſo much invaded, as might have been expected, upon our deliverance from that *Egyptian* thraldom. — I don't remember of any particular act of aſſembly, ſince the revolution, whereby the rights of the crown of Chriſt are aſſerted, in oppoſition to the incroachments that were made upon them in theſe days of publick apoſtacy and perſecution. Yea, inſtead of that, are there not invaſions and incroachments made upon the authority of Chriſt, and the immunities of his kingdom, even ſince that period, particularly in the end of Queen *Anne*'s reign, when deſigns were formed for the overthrow of a proteſtant ſucceſſion, his headſhip and authority was invaded by an almoſt boundleſs toleration of all errors in doctrine and corruptions in worſhip, excepting popery and blaſphemy againſt the Holy Trinity, two evils that never prevail'd more in the memory of man in theſe lands, than ſince the toleration-act was paſt. His authority was at the ſame time invaded by the act reſtoring patronages, whereby

power

power is given to a malignant lord or laird to preſent a man, to take the charge of precious ſouls, who has perhaps no more concern about their ſalvation than the great *Turk*. ✝ And is it not matter of lamentation to ſee ſome of the judicatories of this church, whoſe province it is to contend for the ſovereignty of Chriſt and the rights of his ſubjects, falling in with patrons and heritors of the nation, in oppoſition to the known rights of the chriſtian people, to elect and chooſe their own paſtors? How are the rights of the Lord's people invaded and trode upon by violent ſettlements, up and down the land? A cry is gone up to heaven againſt the builders, by the ſpouſe of Chriſt, like that *Cant.* v. 7. *The watchmen that went about the city, found me, they ſmote me, they wounded me, the keepers of the walls took away my vail from me.* A cry and complaint came in before the bar of the laſt aſſembly for relief and redreſs of theſe and many other grievances, both from miniſters and people; but inſtead of a due regard had thereto, an act is paſt confining the power of election unto heritors and elders, whereby a new wound is given to the prerogative of Chriſt, and the privilege of his ſubjects. ✝ I ſhall ſay the leſs of this act now, that I had opportunity to exoner my ſelf, with relation to it, before the national aſſembly, where it was paſt; only allow me to ſay, that whatever church-authority may be in that act, yet it wants the authority of the Son of God. All eccleſiaſtical authority under heaven is derived from him; and therefore any act that wants his authority, has no authority at all. And ſeeing the reverend ſynod has put me in this place, where I am in

Chriſt's ſtead, I muſt be allowed to ſay of this act, what I apprehend Chriſt himſelf would ſay of it, were he perſonally preſent where I am, and that is, that by this act, the corner-ſtone is recided from, he is rejected in his poor members, and the rich of this world put in their room; I ſay, were Chriſt here preſent, I think he would ſay with relation to that act, *In as much as ye did it unto one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it unto me.* By this act Chriſt is rejected in his authority, becauſe I can find no warrant from the word of God, to confer the ſpiritual privileges of his houſe upon the rich beyond the poor: Whereas by this act, the man with the gold-ring and gay cloathing, is prefer'd unto the man with the vile raiment and poor attire. I add further, that this act, I judge it inconſiſtent with the principles and practices of the beſt reformed churches, aſſerted in their publick *Confeſſions of Faith*, and particularly with the known principles of this church, ſince the reformation, aſſerted in our books of diſcipline, which we are bound by ſolemn covenant to maintain. I am firmly perſwaded, that if a timely remedy be not provided, this act will very ſoon terminate in the overthrow of the church of *Scotland*, and of a faithful miniſtry therein, in regard, that the power of electing miniſters is thereby principally lodged in the hands of a ſet of men who are generally diſaffected to the power of godlineſs, to the doctrine, diſcipline, worſhip and government of this church, as well as to the government of our gracious ſovereign King *George*, and the proteſtant ſucceſſion in his family.

All

All ſound presbyterians who read the hiſtory of our forefathers, generally approve of the practice of Mr. *Samuel Rutherfoord*, Mr. *James Guthrie*, and other worthy miniſters of this church, who proteſted againſt the publick reſolutions, as a thing inconſiſtent with our covenants, and prejudicial to the work of reformation, altho' thereby the door was only opened to malignants to come into places of civil or military truſt; and we who live at this time of day, may ſee the pernicious effects theſe reſolutions had in the church of *Scotland*: But what would our forefathers have thought, or what will ſucceeding generations think of this act of aſſembly, whereby malignants are veſted, not with a civil or military, but with an eccleſiaſtical power, in the ſettlement of the generality of miniſters through the church of *Scotland*? By which means the church of *Scotland*, and her ſacred privileges are render'd exceeding cheap, even in the eyes of her avowed enemies, this being a compliment they neither expected nor deſired at our hands. But after all, I have good reaſon to believe, that this act is far from being the mind of the generality of presbyteries through this national church, and therefore would gladly hope a ſeaſonable ſtand ſhall yet be made againſt it, in order to prevent its pernicious conſequences.

My laſt inference ſhall be in a word of exhortation. Are miniſters of the goſpel builders of the church, and is it the great plot of heaven, to have Chriſt exalted as the head ſtone of the corner? Then let me call and exhort my reverend brethren and fathers, (and I deſire

to apply the exhortation to my ſelf) to concur with heart and hand, in lifting up the chief corner-ſtone, and making his name to be remembered unto all generations, that the people may praiſe him for ever and ever. However he has been, or ſtill is rejected by other builders, yet let us ſtudy to exalt him, ſaying one to another, O, magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.

I ſhall not ſtay, after what has been ſaid, to uſe many motives; only, in ſo many words, let us conſider the excellency of his perſon, and the relation he bears to us and others of our tribe or family, both by nature and office, he being *Immanuel God with us*, ordained the great Prophet, Prieſt and King of the church, to anſwer the maladies and miſeries of ignorance, guilt and bondage we are brought under, by the ſin of the firſt *Adam*. Let us conſider, *that it is his Father's will that all men ſhould honour him as they honour the Father himſelf*; yea *his Father has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name*, and hath ordered *that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus is the Lord, to the glory of his eternal Father*. Let us conſider that this is the work of the Holy Ghoſt, the great ſcope of all his dictates in the word, and of all his graces, influences and operations in the heart, being to lift up this corner-ſtone, *John* xvi. 14. *He ſhall glorifie me, for he ſhall receive of mine, and ſhall ſhew it unto you.* This is the work wherein angels delight to be employ'd: With what alacrity do they celebrate his nativity, and tell the tidings of it unto the ſhepherds, *Luke* ii. 10. *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people*

people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord; and thereupon, *ver.* 13. *a multitude of the heavenly hoſt praiſe God, ſaying glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, and good-will towards men.* This was the work of all the prophets under the Old Teſtament, they all propheſied of him, *teſtified of his ſufferings, and of the glory that ſhould follow.* They were as ſo many harbingers, ſent to prepare the world for the reception of this glorious perſon.—All the apoſtles, prophets, evangeliſts, paſtors and teachers, given by him unto the New Teſtament church, have had this, as the great ſcope of their miniſtry, to edify the body of Chriſt, by lifting up the glory of this head-ſtone of the corner, *Rev.* iv. 10. In ſhort, this is and has been the buſineſs of the church militant here upon earth, and will be the work of the church triumphant thro' eternity. They all with one voice cry, *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power and riches and wiſdom and ſtrength, and honour, and glory and bleſſing*, Rev. v. 12. And is it not glorious encouragement to us, to lift up the honour of our Redeemer, when we have ſuch good company to join us in our work.

Again, let us conſider that Chriſt is *the ſtone* without which there can be no building, for he is the church's All. *Chriſt is all and in all.* He is her light, her life, her righteouſneſs, her ſtrength, her peace, her food, her cloathing, her wiſdom, her holineſs. So that if he be wanting, all is wanting, and the church is ruined. We cannot anſwer the commiſſion we bear from our great Maſter, if we do not exalt the chief corner-ſtone. *'Tis Chriſt whom we preach*, Cloſ-

i, 28. we are to be of *Paul's* ſpirit *to know nothing* among our hearers, *but Chriſt and him crucified*; we are always to *triumph* in the revelation of Chriſt, ſo as the *ſavour of his knowledge may be made manifeſt by us in every place.* To conclude we can never finiſh our courſe with joy, and the miniſtry we have received of the Lord, except this be the great ſcope of our work, whether in doctrine, diſcipline, worſhip or government. I ſhall ſhut up this diſcourſe, with a few advices in order to our being ſucceſsful builders of this glorious fabrick, whereof Chriſt is the head-ſtone of the corner.

1. Then let us beware of the fatal errors before mentioned, whereby the *Jewiſh* builders ruined their once glorious fabrick, and buried themſelves in the ruins thereof. Let us beware of thoſe doctrines vented in our day, which diſparage the perſon of our glorious Redeemer, and derogate from his ſupreme and independent Deity, or his headſhip and ſovereignty in his church. Let us beware of nauſeating the ſpirituality of his doctrine, and the ſublime myſteries of our holy religion, preferring thereunto the harangues of moraliſts. When we preach the law let us open it in its extent and ſpirituality, ſo as to turn in its edge upon the heart and conſciences, that it may be a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Let us preach up the everlaſting righteouſneſs of the Son, as the only ground of a ſinners juſtification, and beware of every thing that has the leaſt tendency to foſter a ſinner in his hope of ſalvation by the works of the law. Let us beware of blocking up the door of acceſs to Chriſt, by legal qualifications, which are no where to be had

had, but in Chriſt himſelf. Let us beware of formality either in preaching or praying, whereby we may deaden the ordinances of God, to our own ſouls or the ſouls of our hearers; and, in order thereto, let us take care to licenſe or lay hands upon none, but ſuch, as in the judgment of charity, we have reaſon to think are acquainted with the power of godlineſs, even though they have been trained up in literature at the foot of a profeſſor of divinity. Let us beware of carnal policy in the matters of Chriſt's kingdom and glory. Let us beware of valuing our ſelves upon the favour of men, great or ſmall. Eſpecially let us take care, that we be not ſwayed in the matters of Chriſt with the favour of great men, for this has been a ſnare in *Miſpah* and a net ſpread upon *Tabor*. Let us ſtudy impartially the exerciſe of diſcipline, and beware of turning the edge of it againſt them that deſerve it leaſt. And let us ſet our ſelves to ſtop theſe paſſages into the houſe of God, by which thieves and robbers moſt ordinarily enter, that the houſe of God be not turned into a den of thieves.

2. In order to our being ſucceſsful builders, let us ſeek the builders word from the great maſter-builder; for there is a word which Chriſt gives to his faithful miniſters, whereby the art of building is much conveyed, *John* xvii. 14. *I have given them thy word.* Without this word from the mouth of Chriſt, we will never know the true art of building the church: By this word the man of God is made a perfect builder, throughly furniſhed unto every good work: And if you ask me, what is that word? I anſwer, it is an experimental acquaintance with

with the power of the word upon the ſoul, particularly the knowledge of that leading myſtery, *God manifeſted in the fleſh.*

3. Let us take care that every ſtone of the building correſpond with the foundation and corner-ſtone; whatever doctrines or practices don't hang right with this regulating ſtone, let that be caſt. In order to which, let us examine our own and others doctrines and converſation by the plumb line and infallible rule of the word. *To the law and to the teſtimony. If they ſpeak not according to theſe things; it is becauſe there is no truth in them,* Iſa. viii. 20.

4. Let us obſerve the ſigns of the times, and whenever we diſcern the danger a coming, either from open enemies or pretended friends, let us give the cry, like faithful watchmen, and tho' fellow-builders be offended there is no help for that. 'Tis a heavy charge that is laid by God againſt ſome as above, that they were dumb dogs that could not bark, but preferred their own carnal eaſe, unto the ſafety of the church, *Iſa.* lvi. 10, 11, 12.

5. Let us wreſtle much at a throne of a grace for the countenance of the great Maſter and aſſiſtance of his Spirit, for *except the Lord build the houſe, the builders build in vain. Paul may plant, and Appollos water, but 'tis God giveth the increaſe.*

The Government upon CHRIST's *Shoulder.*

BEING A

SERMON

PREACH'D

At Stirling, June 4*th*, 1732, *on* Sabbath-*Evening after the Sacrament.*

By Mr EBENEZER ERSKINE *Miniſter of the Goſpel at* Stirling.

PREFACE.

READER,

THE following ſermon having made a great noiſe thro' this and ſeveral other corners of the land: Leſt any ſhould think the author is aſhamed of his doctrine he there delivered, he allows it to come abroad to the

the world with the other. He had begun to preach from that text Iſa. ix. 6. *in* November 30. 1731 *and having ſpoke to the two firſt clauſes, he took occaſion* June 4. 1732. viz. Sabbath *evening after the celebration of the Sacrament at* Stirling, *to inſiſt upon the clauſe immediately following,* The government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder, *as he has been inſiſting upon the following part of the verſe ever ſince.*

Some were of opinion, that the ſubject was unſuitable to the occaſion, after people had been at a communion-table; but it would appear, that ſuch as think ſo, do not conſider, that Chriſt did wade to the throne and government of his mediatory kingdom thro' blood. For my part I do not know how one can be better entertained, either at or immediately after he has been at the Lord's table ſhewing forth his death, than by letting him know, that he who was dead is now alive, and lives for evermore, having the keys of hell and death in his hand. *What more comfortable to a believer, than to hear that the* Lamb ſlain *is now* in the midſt of the throne, *with the reins of government in his hand, eſpecially* in a day of trouble and of treading down, and of perplexity from the Lord God of Hoſts in the valley of viſion?

Others judg'd it amiſs on ſuch an occaſion, to touch upon the Act of Aſſembly anent the ſettlement of vacant congregations, which had been paſt a few days before. All that is needful to be ſaid in anſwer to which is, that the publick wound given by that act was freſh, and the hearts of the poor people of God bleeding, to

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ſee themſelves ſpoil'd by thoſe who ſhould been the guardians of their ſpiritual rights and privileges; and what could be more proper than to panſe the green wound, and pour in ſome of the healing balſam of goſpel-conſolation, ariſing from the government of their great King, who rules in the midſt of his enemies.

The author never pretended to deliver every particular word or ſentence, contained in his notes, which to him would be the greateſt ſlavery and confinement. But as the ſermon ſtood in his notes, ſo it comes abroad; and he ſuppoſes that there will be but very inconſiderable variation. Only the preamble, when he enter'd upon the text is added, without which it would have looked ſomewhat abrupt; beſides ſomething he had not time that evening to overtake, at the end of the diſcourſe. He preached two other ſermons on the ſame clauſe of the verſe, the ſabbath following, which there was no time to tranſcribe for the preſs, otherwiſe the diſcourſe might been more perfect, and the omiſſions quarreled by ſome been ſupplyed.

SERMON, &c.

Iſaiah ix. 6. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder; and his name ſhall be called, Wonderful, Counſellor, The mighty God, The everlaſting father, The prince of peace.*

THE great deſign of God in his whole works of creation and providence, is to manifeſt and make known the glory of his power, wiſdom, goodneſs and greatneſs to the children of men. Hence is that of *David*, Pſal. xix. from the beginning. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth ſpeech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge!* And if it be ask'd, what the great deſign of God is in the ſcriptures? I anſwer, 'Tis juſt to bring a loſt world to the knowledge of a Saviour, *Who is the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon:* All the prophecies, promiſes, hiſtories and doctrines of the word, do point us to him, as the needle in the mariners compaſs points to the pole-ſtar; *To him bore all the prophets witneſs*, and

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when the apoſtles under the New Teſtament were ſent unto all nations with the ſilver trumpet of the everlaſting goſpel in their mouths, what was the great theme of their ſermons? It was juſt to make Chriſt known among the nations; he was the *Alpha* and *Omega* of their whole miniſtry; 'tis Chriſt, ſays *Paul* to the *Coloſſians*, whom we preach; and writing to the *Corinthians*, he declares, and *he deſired to know nothing among them, but Chriſt and him crucified.* In ſhort, firs, our preaching and your hearing is in vain, unleſs we bring you in to the knowledge of Chriſt and an acquaintance with him; *He is the foundation God hath laid in Zion, and another foundation can no man lay.* Our deſign in preaching, and yours in hearing, ſhould be to make you truly gracious and religious; but how ſhall ever a man be acquainted with the power of godlineſs, if he be a ſtranger to him who is the great myſtery of it, even *God manifeſted in the fleſh*? How ſhall we ever fulfil the law as a covenant, but by acquaintance with him, *who is the end of the law for righteouſneſs, to every one that believeth*? How ſhall we ever fulfil it as a rule, but by faith in him, *who is the glory of our ſtrength*? And how ſhall we ever come to God, from whom we are ſeparate, but by him, *who is the way, the new and living way*, and without whom, *there is no coming to the Father*? So that all the lines of religion meet in him as their center. That I may commend him to you, I have read this text of ſcripture, which is as full of Chriſt, as any that we meet with in the ſcriptures of truth, and the more of Chriſt be in any text, the more marrow and fatneſs, the more ſavour and ſweetneſs will be in

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it, to the ſoul that knows him. *To us a child is born, to us a ſon is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder*, &c.

The prophet in the cloſe of the preceeding chapter, having ſpoken of dark and diſmal days of trouble and diſtreſs, comes in the beginning of this, to comfort and encourage the hearts of true believers, with the great and good things which were a coming in the days of the great *Meſſiah*; and there are three great New-Teſtament bleſſings he condeſcends upon.

Firſt, Great light ſhould ſpring up to a loſt world, *ver.* 2. *The people that walked in darkneſs have ſeen a great Light; they that dwell in the land of the ſhadow of death, upon them hath the light ſhined.* This world, particularly of the *Gentile* nations, before the coming of Chriſt, was a dungeon of darkneſs, it was a valley of the ſhadow of death, for want of the goſpel light, *for where no viſion is the people periſh*. But by the coming of Chriſt, whoſe *goings forth were prepared as the morning*, in the diſpenſation of the everlaſting goſpel, *life and immortality are brought to light*, on which account we in this land may join iſſue with *Zacharias* in his ſong, *Luke* i. 78, 79. *Through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the day ſpring from on high hath viſited us, to give light to them that ſit in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.* Oh! that there were a ſuitable prizing of goſpel-light, among theſe who have it in the external diſpenſation of it; but alas, is not that word of Chriſt too appli-

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cable to many, *Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*

A *ſecond* great New Teſtament bleſſing the prophet ſpeaks of, is joy in the Lord. *ver.* 3. *Thou haſt multiplyed the nation and not encreaſed the joy; they joy before thee, according to the joy in harveſt, and as men rejoice, when they divide the ſpoil.* The holy nation of the New Teſtament church, would be multiply'd upon the promulgation of the goſpel-light, ſo that Chriſt would have the *dew of his youth* by the *flowings in of the nations* unto the boſom of the church; but yet the carnal joy of *Iſrael* ſhould not be thereby increas'd, like that of the *Jews*, when they ſat under their vines, and under their fig trees, eating the milk and honey of the land of *Canaan*; yet there ſhould be abundance of ſpiritual joy in the Lord, which would put more gladneſs in the hearts of true converts, than the joy of the harveſt, or of them that divide the ſpoil. *Obſerve*, That the joy of faith, which terminates in the perſon, rightcouſneſs, and fulneſs of Chriſt, and the favour of God through him, infinitely exceeds all the carnal mirth and jollity of a tranſient world, which is but *like the crackling of thorns under a pot*; the joy of faith is a joy unſpeakable and full of glory.

Spiritual liberty and freedom is the *third* New Teſtament-bleſſing, that would follow the great Meſſiah, *ver.* 4, 5. *For thou has broken the yoke of his burden, and ſtaff of his ſhoulder, the rod of his oppreſſor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warriour is with confus'd*

confus'd noiſe, and garments rolled in blood, but this ſhall be with burning and fewel of fire. As *Gideon* was an inſtrument in the hand of God, for breaking the heavy yoke of oppreſſion, that *Midian* had wreathed about the neck of *Iſrael* of old; ſo Chriſt, upon his coming like a mighty champion, ſhould travel in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, to deliver poor ſinners from the hands of all their enemies, ſin, ſatan, the world, and the curſe of a broken law, unto which they were in bondage; but yet let it be obſerved, that there is a great diſparity betwixt *Gideon*'s way of reſcuing *Iſrael* and Chriſt's way of delivering his people from their ſpiritual bondage, for *Gideon* at that time delivered *Iſrael* by the force of carnal arms, *with the confus'd noiſe of the warriour, and garments rolled in blood*, but the weapons of Chriſt's kingdom are not ſuch; no, they *are not carnal, but mighty thro' God, to the pulling down of ſtrong holds.* Chriſt's kingdom is to be reared, and ſpiritual liberty brought about, by burning and fewel of fire, or by *the ſpirit of judgment and the ſpirit of burning*, chap. iv. 4. that is by the power of the the ſpirit of Chriſt coming along with the diſpenſation of goſpel-light, which would burn up and conſume the luſts and corruptions of men, and all the works of the devil, even as fire conſumes any combuſtible matter, that is caſt into it.

Now if any ſhould ask who is he, and where is he that ſhould do all theſe great things? Why, here you have an anſwer in the words of my text, *For unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder*, &c. The prophet, *chap.* vii. *ver.* 14.

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had told them that *a virgin ſhould conceive and bring forth a ſon, and they ſhall call his name Immanuel*; now ſays he, this is he that ſhall do all theſe great wonderful things upon his appearance upon the ſtage of time, for to us he is born, and to us he is given.

In the words we may notice theſe things following. *1ſt.* The incarnation of the great Meſſias, for here the prophet ſpeaks of his birth. 2. His donation; he is the gift of God to a loſt world, *To us a ſon is given.* 3. His advancement to the ſupreme rule and authority, *The government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder.* 4. His character and deſignation in five names here given him, which ſhows that he has a *name above every name, Wonderful Counſelour, the everlaſting Father, mighty God, and Prince of Peace.* 5. We have the relation he ſtands in to loſt ſinners of *Adam*'s family; he is born to us, he is given to us, and not to the angels which fell. 6. We have the application and triumph of faith upon all this, for the church here lays claim to him, and triumphs in her claim, for the words are uttred in a way of holy boaſting. To *us* this Child is born, to *us* this Son is given; much like the triumph of the ſpouſe, *Cant.* v. 16. *This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughter of Jeruſalem.* As if ſhe had challenged the whole world to ſhew his match, I have diſcourſed already of the *firſt* two of theſe particulars, and now I go on to the *third*, viz. The authority wherewith Chriſt is veſted in the church, by his Father's ordination, *The government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder.*

Sirs, ye have been this day travelling with him to *Golgatha* and *Calvary*, where you might

ſee him bearing his croſs, yea nailed to it, and pouring out his ſoul unto death, in a way of ſatisfaction to juſtice for our ſins; but now I would lead you into *Mount Sion*, that ye may view him ſwaying the ſceptre of heaven; for the government is laid upon his ſhoulder, the Father hath put all things unto his hands for the good of his church. What is needful for the explication of theſe words, will occur in ſpeaking to this doctrine, *That as the church is Chriſt's peculiar kingdom in this world, ſo the government thereof is by the Father's ordination committed to him, or laid upon his ſhoulder.*

For confirmation of the doctrine, I need only repeat the words of the text, tho' many other ſcriptures might be adduc'd, which to gain time I wave at preſent, *To us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder.* In diſcourſing of which doctrine, through divine aſſiſtance, I ſhall endeavour to do theſe things. I. I would offer a few thoughts anent the church or kingdom of Chriſt in the world. II. Speak a little of the government of his kingdom. III. How it is committed to him by his Father. IV. Why it is committed to him, or laid upon his ſhoulder. V. Apply.

Firſt. To offer a few thoughts anent the church or kingdom of Chriſt in this world. 1. then, By the church I underſtand that remnant of *Adam*'s family, who being determin'd to break their covenant with hell, and their agreement with death, join themſelves to Chriſt, as their Prophet, Prieſt and King, either in reality, or by a viſible and credible profeſſion of their faith in him. This remnant of *Adam*'s family,

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as they are ſcattred through the world, make the church univerſal, and any particular member of this, whether in a nation, congregation, or family, are called particular churches, national, parochial or domeſtiek; but ſtill theſe are but branches of the church univerſal, which makes the myſtical body of Chriſt in the world. 2. The church or kingdom of Chriſt, during the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, was peculiarly confin'd to the poſterity of *Abraham*, to the nation of the *Jews*, excepting a few gentile proſelytes: But now ſince the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh, and his reſurrection from dead, is extended alſo to the gentile nations, according to *Pſal.* ii. 8. the partition-wall being removed, and a door of faith opened to the gentiles, *Chriſt is now ſet for an enſign to the gentile world.* Iſa. xi. 10 *And in that day there ſhall be a root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for an enſign to the people; to it ſhall the gentiles ſeek, and his reſt ſhall be glorious.* 3. All the ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom and government, are originally brought out of the territories of hell, being *children of wrath even as others.* Every man by nature comes into this world, wearing the devils livery of original ſin and of a depraved nature, till Chriſt in a day of power come and ſet the captive of the mighty at liberty; the ſtrong man keeps the houſe, till Chriſt, who is the ſtronger, enter in and ſpoil him of his goods, and tranſlate the poor ſoul from the power of darkneſs into his kingdom of light. 4. The great engine whereby Chriſt rears up a kingdom to himſelf in the world, is the preaching of the everlaſting goſpel, accompany'd with the power and efficacy of his ſpirit. This is call'd *the rod of his*

ſtrength, whereby he makes *a willing people*. *The goſpel is the power of God unto ſalvation*, and it is by *theſe weapons*, *which are not carnal but mighty thro' God*, he caſts down ſtrong holds. 5. The church and kingdom of Chriſt being founded and governed by him, *in whom all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge are hid*, cannot miſs of being one of the beſt regulated ſocieties in the world as under his management, whatever irregularities may be found in her through the corruptions of men intermingling with the concerns of the kingdom. The church, becauſe of her comely order and regularity, as ſhe is moulded by her king in the midſt of her, is compar'd into a city lying four ſquare, *Rev.* xxi. ſhe is ſaid to be comely as *Jeruſalem, beautiful for ſituation, the joy of the whole earth*. Every thing neceſſary to render any kingdom or ſociety regular is to be found in the church or kingdom of Chriſt. As

1. A kingdom well conſtitute hath its laws, and ſo hath the church of Chriſt; and *the laws* given by her king *are all holy, juſt and good*, and all the true ſubjects of the kingdom delight in the laws of their King, as being the tranſcript of infinite wiſdom and equity.

2. A kingdom hath its officers under its king, and ſo hath the church of Chriſt; for *he gave ſome apoſtles, ſome prophets, evangeliſts, paſtors and teachers, for the perfecting of the church, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fullneſs of Chriſt*, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. And 'tis by his officers or office-bearers that ye have been

be ſerv'd this day at this table, according to his direction.

3. A kingdom hath its courts, where the ſubjects attend to receive the will of the king, and the benefits of his adminiſtration; and ſo hath the church. *David* ſpeaking of the Old Teſtament church, and particularly of *Jeruſalem*, a type of the New Teſtament church, tells us, *There are the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the houſe of David, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord to the teſtimony of Iſrael.* The church of Chriſt, even the church militant hath her courts for government, where the key of diſcipline is exerciſed, and her courts for worſhip, where the doctrine, the ordinances of worſhip are diſpenſed.

4. A kingdom hath its ſeal: We hear frequently of the broad ſeal of the kingdom, which is commonly appended into charters for their confirmation. So in the kingdom of Chriſt he hath appended two publick ſeals unto the charter of his covenant of grace, *viz.* baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, the laſt of which we have been this day diſpenſing unto you for the confirmation of your faith, as to the validity of the charter, and happy for ever is that man, who has got the internal ſeal of the ſacrament, and privy ſeal of the Holy Spirit with it, for *he is ſealed up to the day of redemption.*

5. A kingdom commonly hath its enemies to grapple with, both foreign and inteſtine; and ſo hath the kingdom of Chriſt, the gates of hell and its auxiliaries have in all ages been attempting to overthrow the kingdom of Chriſt in the world, the *Dragon* with his angels and armies make war againſt *Michael* and his angels, and

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the war between the ſeed of the woman, and the ſeed of the ſerpent, like that betwixt *Amalek* and *Iſrael* will never end while the world ſtands. But beſides the foreign enemies the church of Chriſt hath to deal with, inteſtine enemies, corrupt officers, members and miniſters, pretending to build, and yet cauſing the work to ceaſe, in as far as in them lies. Yea, the true ſubjects of this kingdom of Chriſt, have the enemy of a deceitful and corrupt heart within them, that is ready to join hand with the enemy that is more foreign. The kingdom of Chriſt is a theatre of continual war from the diſturbances perpetually created by ſome of theſe enemies, and will be militant while in this world, *for we wreſtle not with fleſh and blood* only, *but with principalities and powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places*; and ye who have been this day at the banqueting-houſe, provide and prepare for the battle, &c.

6. A kingdom hath its armies and auxiliaries; and ſo hath the church of Chriſt, being in a confederacy with the Lord of hoſts; the armies of heaven are ready to fight her quarrel, and to ſtep in to the aſſiſtance of the true believer, who is minting to fight the good fight of faith, under the conduct of the captain of ſalvation; and becauſe all the ſubjects are ſoldiers, here is a ſuitable military equipage provided for them, *the ſhield of faith, the helmet of ſalvation*, &c.

7. A kingdom hath its fortifications and ſtrong holds; and ſo hath the church of Chriſt. *Iſa* xxvi. 1. *In that day ſhall this ſong be ſung in the land of Judah, we have a ſtrong city, ſalvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.* The

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ſtrong ramparts of the kingdom are the divine attributes; for *as the mountains are round about Jeruſalem, ſo the Lord encompaſſeth them that fear him.* A God in Chriſt is the churches refuge, *Pſal.* xlvi. 1. *God is our refuge, a very preſent help in trouble.*

The *Second* thing was to ſpeak a little of the government and adminiſtration of the kingdom. What I have to offer as to this, take in the particulars following. 1*ſt*, Chriſt himſelf you ſee in the text is the great and glorious Governor, *The government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder:* Pſal. ii. 6. *Yet have I ſet my king upon my holy hill of Zion.* Micah. v. 2. *But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, thiugh thou be little among the thouſands of Judah, yet out of thee ſhall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Iſrael: Whoſe goings forth have been of old, from everlaſting.* Micah. ii. 13. *And their king ſhall paſs before them, and the Lord on the head of them.* Eph. i. 22, 23. *He hath given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulneſs of him that filleth all in all.* Oh how may the church of believers pride themſelves in their king and governor, ſaying, *The Lord is our defence, the holy one of Iſrael is our king, in him ſhall all the ſeed of Iſrael be juſtify'd, and ſhall glory.* 2. All things in heaven, earth and hell are put under the power of Chriſt, for the more advantagious government of his church, *Eph.* i. 22, 23. juſt now quoted, and *Phil.* ii. 9, 10, 11. So that not only the government of the church, but the government of angels, men and devils, of all things viſible and inviſible are in the hand of Chriſt for the ſake of his church. Hence is that promiſe or article of his latter will, *Rom.* viii. 28.

28. *All things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpoſe.* 3. Chriſt the King of *Zion* is wonderfully fitted by his Father, for the government and adminiſtration: You read of his qualifications for it, *Iſa.* ii. 2, 3, 4. *And the ſpirit of the Lord ſhall reſt upon him, the ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, the ſpirit of counſel and might, the ſpirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. And ſhall make him of quick underſtanding, in the fear of the Lord, and he ſhall not judge after the ſight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth. And he ſhall ſmite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips ſhall he ſlay the wicked.* Oh! where was there ever ſuch a well qualified governor? 'Tis impoſſible he can err in his adminiſtration; and what ſweetens this is, that the qualifications of the king are communicable, and actually communicated unto all the loyal ſubjects of the kingdom, for he is not only a head of government but of influences, for out of his fulneſs do all we receive and grace for grace. 4. Chriſt's government and adminiſtration is very wonderful and ſurprizing; you ſee here that the name of that governor is *wonderful.* He is wonderful in his perſon, and wonderful in his adminiſtration, for by his skill of management, in his kingdom, he brings light out of darkneſs, order out of confuſion, life out of death, ſtrength out of weakneſs, and therefore the ſubjects may be eaſy amidſt the greateſt apparent confuſions, even though the mountains

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were removing, and heaven and earth mingling, for *he is the Lord that doth wonders, and rules even in the raging of the ſea*, &c. 5. Chriſt's government and adminiſtration in and about his church and people is exceeding wiſe; ſo much is imported in his being called *the counſellor. Wiſdom and council are his, there is no ſearching out of his underſtanding.* The deepeſt laid plots of hell are all open before him; for he *diſcovers deep things out of darkneſs, and brings to light the ſhadows of death*; he rules in the midſt of his enemies, and turns all their councils to fooliſhneſs; and as for his loyal ſubjects, *he will guide them by his council, and afterward bring them to glory.* 6. Chriſt's government and adminiſtration is irreſiſtible, for the governor is the *mighty God*, who will go thro' with his deſigns; who can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, what doeſt thou? *O let mount Zion rejoyce, let the daughters of Judah be glad*, for her King in the midſt of her is mighty, yea the almighty God, who is able to protect his Servants, and is both able and reſolved to deſtroy his enemies, *High is his Hand, and ſtrong is his right hand, and his right hand doth ever valiantly.* How valiantly did he ſpoil principalities and powers on the croſs? And he is as valiant as ever. 7. Chriſt in the government of his church and people is exceeding tender and compaſſionate, for his name is the *everlaſting Father, with whom compaſſions flow, and his mercy is from everlaſting to everlaſting upon them that fear him. As a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him; he gathers the lambs in his boſom, and gently leads them that are with young; and in him the fatherleſs findeth mer-*

cy. He will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoaking flax. 8. Chriſt's Government and adminiſtration of his church is very peaceable, for his Name is the *Prince of Peace*, and *of the increaſe of his government and peace there ſhall be no end.* 'Tis true, he has told his ſubjects that *in the world they ſhall have tribulation, but yet in him they ſhall have peace, for he hath overcome the world*, and the peace he gives is ſuch as the world can neither give nor take away, *John* xiv. 27. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* 9. This government is everlaſting, for of the Increaſe of his government there ſhall be no end. His kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom, and his dominion that which ſhall not be deſtroyed; his ſeed ſhall endure for ever, and his throne built up to all generations. Other kings dye, and their kingdoms moulder away into nothing; but *he is the king eternal, immortal*, and his kingdom endureth for ever. *Thy throne O God is for ever and ever, the ſcepter of thy kingdom is a right ſcepter. Judgment and juſtice are the habitation of his throne*; and this is what renders his government everlaſting, becauſe this king doth rule in righteouſneſs, *and his throne is eſtabliſhed in juſtice.*

The *Third* thing was to enquire, how the government of the church is committed unto Chriſt, or laid upon his ſhoulder. Interpreters think, that in this expreſſion there is an alluſion to the antient cuſtom of carrying the enſigns of government upon the ſhoulders of theſe who were inveſted with it, or of their officers. The

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plain meaning is, that the government and ſupreme authority of the church, whether militant or triumphant, is devolved upon him. An expreſſion much of the ſame import you have, *Iſa.* xxii. 2. *And the key of the houſe of David will I lay upon his ſhoulders; ſo he ſhall open and none ſhall ſhut, and he ſhall ſhut and none ſhall open.* Now the government is committed to Chriſt, or laid upon his ſhoulder, with a three or fourfold ſolemnity. 1. With the ſolemnity of an unalterable decree, *Iſa.* ii. 6, 7. *Yet have I ſet my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, the Lord hath ſaid unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion.* Now, can this decree of heaven be reverſed, or theſe mountains of braſs be overturned? No ſurely, *the counſel of the Lord ſhall ſtand*; and therefore the crown ſhall ſtand on the Redeemer's head, *and the government ly upon his ſhoulder.* 2. With the ſolemnity of a covenant tranſacted betwixt him and his eternal Father, when the counſel of peace was between them both; and what is the iſſue of that grand counſel, which was held in heaven, from the antient ages of eternity? It was juſt, that *the man whoſe name is the Branch* ſhould come out of his place, that he ſhould bear the glory, and that he ſhould ſit and rule upon his throne, *Zech* vi. 13. 3. With the ſolemnity of an oath, ratifying the determination of the counſel of peace in this matter. *Pſal.* lxxxix. 3, 4. *I have made a covenant with my choſen, I have ſworn unto David my ſervant. Thy ſeed will I eſta-*

bliſh for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. And you ſee *ver.* 35. that in his oath he impignorates his holineſs, the moſt orient and dazling jewel of his crown, for the greater ſecurity. *Once have I ſworn by my holineſs, that I will not lye unto David,* i. e. I will as ſoon ceaſe to be a holy God as turn my Son out of the government; no, it ſhall lye upon his ſhoulder, as long as I am holy, and that is for ever and ever. The government is committed to him by a ſolemn election and inveſtiture; he was elected to the government by his own Father, and the joint concurrence of all the ſubjects, *Iſa.* xlii. 1. *He is mine elect in whom my ſoul delighteth.* Pſal. lxxxix. 15. *I have exalted one choſen out of the people, I have found David my Servant, with my holy oyl have I anointed him.* And the whole family of heaven and earth concur in the choiſe, without a contradictory voice. Hence, when he mounts the throne and aſcends up on high, they all clap their hands, ſaying, as *Pſal.* xlvii. 5, 6. *God is gone up with a ſhout, the Lord with the ſound of a trumpet: ſing praiſes to God, ſing praiſes; ſing praiſes unto our king, ſing praiſes.* That paſſage, *Rev.* v. 11, 12. is thought by ſome judicious interpreters, particularly the great *Owen*, to have a reſpect unto the reception Chriſt met with, when he returned to heaven, and ſat down on the throne in our nature; *And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beaſts, and the elders; And the number of them was ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands;* and what ſay they? How cordially do they give their vote, that he ſhould reign? *Saying with a loud voice,*

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Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour and glory, and bleſſing.

The *Fourth* thing was to give the reaſons of the doctrine; Why is the government laid upon his ſhoulder? I anſwer, 1. Becauſe his ſhoulder alone was able to bear the weight of the adminiſtration and government of the church. They who uſurp the adminiſtration, take too much upon them, 'tis a burthen too heavy for angels or archangels; how then ſhould ſinful worms bear it? God the father ſaw, that none in heaven or earth but his own eternal Son was match for ſuch a province; and therefore commits it to him, with a promiſe of his own aſſiſtance in the government, *Pſal.* lxxxix. 1. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty.—I have found him.— I have anointed him.—With whom my hand ſhall be eſtabliſhed, mine arm alſo ſhall ſtrengthen him.*

2. It is laid upon his ſhoulder, or committed to him, that he might be in better capacity for accompliſhing the ſalvation of his people, and bringing many ſons and daughters into glory; hence we find his kingdom and ſalvation frequently joined together. *Thou art my king of old, working ſalvation in the midſt of the earth*; and Zech. ix. 9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of of Zion, ſhout O daughter of Jeruſalem: Behold thy king cometh unto thee, juſt and having ſalvation.* Let his kingdom be never ſo low, his ſubjects in the worſt of bondage and miſery, whether as to the external or internal man, if their governour and king give but the word of command, immediately deliverance comes, *Pſal.* xliv. 4. *Thou art my king, O God command deliverance*

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for Jacob. His command dried up the red ſea, divided *Jordan*, and brought *Iſrael* into the promiſed land.

3. The government is laid upon his ſhoulder, *that he may ſtill the enemy and the avenger*, that he may reſent his Father's quarrel againſt Satan, and entirely bruiſe his head, for his defacing and ſtricking at his and his Father's image in our firſt parents, and diſturbing his government, which he had eſtabliſhed in innocence. Chriſt's great buſineſs when he appeared in this world in perſon, and when he appears in the diſpenſation of the goſpel, and power of his ſpirit, is to deſtroy the works of the Devil, to rear up his own kingdom, in the ruin of the old ſerpent and his ſeed. Hence it is, that when he takes the field, he gives the ſhout of war againſt that enemy and all that join him, *Iſa.* lxiii. 4. *The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.*

4. The government is laid upon his ſhoulder or committed unto him, becauſe he hath a juſt title to it. As 1. He has a title to it by birth, he is God's firſt born, and therefore *he will make him higher than the kings of the earth*; yea he is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords.* 2. He has a title to it by purchaſe; he hath redeemed his church by his own blood, and therefore has the beſt right to govern her, his croſs was the way in which he came to the crown, he ſuffered, and then entered into his glory. 3. He has a right to it by his Father's promiſe and charter, granted him upon the footing of his death and ſatisfaction, *Iſa* liii. 12. *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he ſhall divide the ſpoil with the ſtrong: Becauſe he hath poured*

poured out his ſoul unto death; and *Phil.* ii. 8, 9, 10. we are told that becauſe he endured the croſs and deſpiſed the ſhame, therefore God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. 4 He has a title to it by conqueſt; he invades the territories of the God of this world, ſets up his ſtandard within his dominions, and ſpoils principalities and powers, ſets the captives of the mighty at liberty, he travels in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, ſhewing himſelf mighty to ſave, ſubduing ſinners, and bringing every thought into captivity into his obedience; and becauſe he doth ſo, therefore the government is committed to him, and laid upon his ſhoulder.

The *Fifth* thing was the application of the doctrine. The firſt uſe may be of information in the following particulars. Is it ſo, that the government is laid upon the ſhoulders of the Redeemer by the ordination of the Father? See hence,

1. The wonderful love of God which he bears to his church and people, in providing ſuch a ruler and governour for them. I remember the Queen of *Sheba*, 1 *Kings.* x. 9. in her addreſs to *Solomon* ſhe ſays, *Becauſe the Lord loved Iſrael for ever, therefore made he the king to do judgment and juſtice.* So well may we ſay here, becauſe the Lord loved his church and People, therefore he made his own eternal Son King in the midſt of her, and laid the government upon his ſhoulders. O! what a wonderful evidence of his love is this? And ſhould not this make the under-governours of the church very tender, and take heed of ruling with rigour, and to be aware of what rulers they ſet over her? 2. See

2. See hence, what a happy government and adminiſtration, believers the ſaints of God, are under, *viz.* the government of the child born and the ſon given to us, whoſe name is the Wonderful, Counſellour, &c. The Queen of *Sheba*, in the place now cited, 1 *Kings* x. 9. when ſhe ſaw the glory of *Solomon*, and the wiſdom of his adminiſtration, her ſpirit fails her, and *ver.* 8. ſhe cries out, *Happy are thy men, happy are theſe thy ſervants who ſtand continually before thee, and hear thy wiſdom.* But *behold a greater than Solomon is here.* *Solomon* and all his wiſdom and glory was but a faint type of the glory and wiſdom of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the glory of his perſon and adminiſtration, and therefore upon far better ground we may ſay of the ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, as *Moſes* did of *Iſrael*, *Deut.* xxxiii. 29. *Happy art thou, O Iſrael: Who is like unto thee, O people ſaved by the Lord, the ſhield of thy help, who is the ſword of thy excellency.*

3. See hence the miſery of a wicked unbelieving world, who will not have him to rule over them, on whoſe ſhoulders the government is laid, but break his bands, and caſt away his cords from them; why, he that ſits in heaven ſhall laugh at their impotent attempts againſt the government of his ſon, and he hath authorized him to break all that will not bow to his government; *thou ſhalt break them as with a rod of iron, and daſh them in pieces as a potter's veſſel:* Even the great potentates, who will not ſtoop unto him, he will cut them off, for *he cuts off the ſpirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth, and ſtrikes*

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them through in the day of his wrath, &c.

4. Is it ſo, that the government is laid upon his ſhoulders? Then ſee the nullity of all acts, laws and conſtitutions that don't bear the ſtamp of Chriſt, and that are not conſiſtent with the laws and orders he has left for the government of his church; they cannot miſs to be null, becauſe *Zion*'s king never touch't them with his ſcepter, they want a foundation in the word of God: And unleſs acts and laws are founded there, they have no foundation at all, becauſe there is no church-authority, but what is derived from him.

5. See hence, that they run a very dangerous riſque who do injury to his ſubjects, or ſtrip them of any of the rights, privileges, or immunities he has granted them, and purchaſed for them, with the price of his blood. Among other privileges which *Zion*'s king hath allowed his ſubjects this is none of the leaſt, that they ſhould have the choice of their paſtors; for which cauſe he hath required them to try the ſpirits and gifts miniſters are endowed with, whether they be calculate for the edification of their ſouls, *John* iv. 1. 'Tis a command not given unto heritors and elders only, but even to little children, young men and fathers. *Beloved*, ſays he, *believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits*, viz. of miniſters and preachers, *whether they be of God*; and the reaſon he gives is remarkable, in the cloſe of the *verſe*, *Becauſe many falſe prophets are gone abroad into the world.* And in a ſuitableneſs to this trying of the ſpirits of the prophets, we find *Acts* vi. that it was the multitude of diſciples, that by expreſs order are commanded to chuſe out from among them men

full of the Holy Ghoſt and wiſdom. The apoſtles, the extraordinary officers in the church, and who, one would think, were the moſt competent judges of men full of the Holy Ghoſt and wiſdom, yet they would not take that power upon them, which is now lodg'd in heritors and elders. I fear, the partiality ſhown in our publick acts, in preferring the great, the noble, the rich man with the gay clothing, before the poor of this world, whom generally God hath choſen, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, lay a foundation for a controverſy between God and this nation, which will not ſoon be at an end. Chriſt's little ones are but little regarded now a days, but they who maltreat them, to gratify the greateſt upon earth, will ſmart for it in the iſſue. It is an awful word uttered by him, upon whoſe ſhoulders the government is laid, *Matth* xviii. 6, 7. *But whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the deepths of the ſea; wo to the world becauſe of offences, for it muſt needs be that offences come: But wo to that man by whom the offence cometh.*

6. If the government be upon his ſhoulders, then hence I infer, that they have a hard task to manage, who attempt to juſtle him out of his government, and take it upon their own ſhoulders.

Queſt. Who are theſe? I anſwer 1. *Papiſts* who ſet up the man of ſin to be the head of the church, calling him Chriſt's vicar. He is antichriſt, whom Chriſt will deſtroy with the breath of his mouth and the brightneſs of his coming. 2. Prelatiſts who ſet up arch-biſhops and dioceſan

ſan Biſhops in the church of Chriſt, officers whom Chriſt never ordain'd in his kingdom, or never were warranted by his word: We read of no officer under the New Teſtament ſuperior to a preſbyter, and therefore arch-biſhops and biſhops have no warrant in the word, and can be none of the officers of Chriſt's kingdom. 3. *Eraſtians* who take the government off Chriſt's ſhoulders, and lay it upon the civil magiſtrate, putting it in his power to caſt the government of the church of Chriſt into what mould and faſhion is moſt agreeable unto his worldly Intereſt. What an affront is it done unto the Son of God, to have any mortal man declared head in all caſes not only civil but eccleſiaſtical? This was an uſurpation upon the crown of Chriſt under ſome former reigns, which I'm afraid is never yet cleanly abrogated or aboliſhed to this day. 4. Theſe potentates, who take upon them to tolerate any doctrines or any worſhip inconſiſtent with the doctrine, worſhip or government Chriſt hath eſtabliſhed in his kingdom. 5. Theſe profeſs'd presbyterians, who under that diſguiſe exerciſe a lordly prelacy and dominion over the church of Chriſt, in thruſting in men upon congregations without, and contrary to the free choice their king has allowed them. I fear there ſhall be a ſad reckoning er'e all be done, for the violent rapes which are committed upon the ſpouſe of Chriſt up and down the land. Chriſt myſtical is wounded in the houſe of his profeſſed friends, and it will be a wonder if their be not wounds for wounds, before the ſcene be ended. For 7. If the government be upon Chriſt's ſhoulder, then hence I infer, that all odds will be even, and that Chriſt will render tribulation to

thoſe that trouble, vex, and haraſs his poor people, in their ſpiritual rights and privileges. He will ariſe for the ſighing of the poor, and the cries of the needy; and O when he doth ariſe, the vengeance of his temple will fall heavy upon the heads of thoſe who ſpoil it.

I conclude with an uſe of conſolation, to the poor people of God; particularly to thoſe that are ſpoiled of their liberties and privileges as chriſtians; for tho' they be forſaken of them whoſe buſineſs it is to take the greateſt care of them, yet they are not forſaken of their God; and our commiſſion leads us particularly to preach the goſpel to the poor, to comfort them that mourn in *Zion*, to give them beauty for aſhes, and the oyl of joy for mourning. We are to ſtrengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. There are theſe few grounds of conſolation I offer you in your preſent circumſtances. As

Firſt, Your God does not ſtand as an unconcerned ſpectator of the injuries that are done you at this day; no, he is obſerving, and reſents the ſpoil that is committed upon you. You may read for this is a challenge, and an awful challenge given on their behalf, *Iſa.* iii. 12, 13, 14, 15. *As for my people, children are their oppreſſors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee, cauſe thee to err, and deſtroy the way of thy paths. The Lord ſtandeth up to plead, and ſtandeth to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof; for ye have eaten up the vineyard, the ſpoil of the poor is in your houſes. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind*

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the faces of the poor? ſaith the Lord of hoſts.

2. Know for your comfort, that God hath founded *Zion.* This is a topick of conſolation, which is particularly preſented unto the poor of his people, and accordingly to be told by the meſſengers of the nations, *Iſa.* xiv. 32. *What ſhall one then anſwer the meſſengers of the nations?* (viz. when they are enquiring about the ſtate and circumſtances of God's *Iſrael*, in a dark and drumbly day like this) The anſwer is, that *the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people ſhall truſt in it,* i. e. Let it be proclaimed to the world, that he who laid the foundation of *Zion*, will build her up; and when he doth ſo, he will appear in his glory, and his poor people, however at under, ſhall truſt in it as an unſhaken truth, that he who founded *Zion*, will take care of her, and of theſe who eſpouſe her cauſe.

3. Know that he who hath the government upon his ſhoulders, rules in the midſt of his enemies, and has ſo much of the art of government, that he both can, and will bring good out of evil, advantage to his poor people out of things tending to their hurt and prejudice. *Jacob's* ſons conſpire againſt the life of their brother, they ſell him unto the hands of the *Iſmaelitiſh* merchants; they in all this had no other view but to ſatisfy their luſt of revenge; however God meant it for good, as was proved by the event.

4. Know that the moſt dark and cloudie like diſpenſations, towards the church and people of God, are in the event found to have been pregnant with love and mercy; he who hath the government upon his ſhoulders turns them ſo about,

about, as they are made to underſtand his loving kindneſs in all theſe things.

5. Know for your comfort, tha the on whoſe ſhoulders the government is laid, hath power to pro ide you with honeſt miniſters, notwithſtanding of all the bars that ly in the way of your being comfortably provided; yea his power is caſt unto a promiſe that you may act faith upon it, *Iſa.* xxx. 20, 21. *And tho' the Lord give you bread of adverſity, and the water of affliction, yet ſhall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any-more, but thine eyes ſhall ſee thy teachers: And thine ears ſhall hear a word behind thee, ſaying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.* Jer. iii. 15. *I will give you paſtors according to mine heart, that ſhall feed you with knowledge and underſtanding.* Our great governor hath the ſtars in his right hand, and he calls them forth by name, and therefore be not afraid, only believe.

But now to ſhut up this diſcourſe, I ſhall 1. Tell you ſome of the ſecrets of Chriſt's government. 2. Offer a few advices to the Lord's people.

Firſt, A few ſecrets of Chriſt's government with reſpect to his people in this world. As 1. That his publick management in providence ſeems many times to interfere with his promiſe; as in the caſe of *Abraham* his being commanded to ſacrifice his ſon, the promiſe made of the kingdom to *David*, &c. 2. His acts of government have a light as well as a dark ſide. No affliction for the preſent is joyous but grievous, but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs. 3. There is a pleaſant regularity in all his government, however perplexed

plex'd it may appear unto us; and when the work is done, beauty will ariſe out of it, as out of the *Chaos* aroſe a beautiful world. 4. In his adminiſtrations he hath long fetches, which we are not able to diſcover, or ſee to the end of at firſt inſtance, 'tis only ſome links, and not the full chain of providence that lies open to us; God muſt have his own time to finiſh his work. 5. His adminiſtrations many times take very ſurpriſing turns, as when *Iſrael* was brought to the borders of *Canaan*, and they expecting immediately, to enter upon the poſſeſſion of the promiſed land, and yet are ſent back to meaſure the hills of the wilderneſs for the ſpace of forty years. When the deſigns of his adminiſtration ſeem to be brought to the birth, ſome new occurrence may caſt up, which to our view ſeems to render all abortive. 6. Theſe acts of his goverment, which ſeem to us to portend utter ruin to the church and his kingdom in the world, are found to be the very means for their deliverance and outgate. No ſtep of providence ſo much haſtned *Joſeph*'s preferment, as that of his being caſt into priſon, and laid under fetters of iron; *Iſrael*'s pinch at the red ſea was the time of the Lord's appearing for their delivery, and the ruine of *Pharaoh* and his hoſt.

Secondly, I conclude with a few advices to the ſubjects of *Zion*, eſpecially in this day of trouble and treading down. 1. Keep the eyes of faith fixed on him, who holds the helm, and believe, with an aſſured faith, that the *Lord doth reign for ever, even thy God O Zion, unto all generations.* He that reigns is *Immanuel God with us*, not a God againſt us, but *with us*, or *upon our ſide*, Pſal. xlix. *The Lord of hoſts is*

for

for us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, therefore will we not be afraid, tho' mountains be removed. 2. Keep the promiſe made to the church in your view, in the midſt of the darkeſt diſpenſations, and do not pore ſo much upon what is before you in the courſe of providence, as upon the promiſe; for no man can know God's love or hatred by what is before him; but the promiſe is the very picture and immediate product of his infinite mind. *David*, by poring upon the external conduct of providence, is almoſt carried down the ſtream, to atheiſm and irreligion, *Pſal.* lxxiii. 13. till he went to the ſanctuary and conſulted the oracles of the word. 3. *Wait on the Lord and do not make haſte, for the Lord is a God of judgment, and bleſſed are all they that wait for him; they ſhall not be aſhamed.*

4. Commit your way to the Lord, even when you walk in the midſt of darkneſs, truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay your ſelves upon your God, and ſo ye ſhall be keept in perfect peace, and integrity and uprightneſs ſhall preſerve you Keep your ſelves in the love and fear of God, looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our ſaviour Jeſus Chriſt, when all the ſeeming crooks of his government ſhall be made even.

FINIS.